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## NOTES ON THE CIRCUMCISION RITES OF THE BALOVALE TRIBES

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### SYNOPSIS

*Data collected in the Mwinilunga, Balovale and Kabompo districts of Northern Rhodesia, are presented on the circumcision rites of the Lunda, Luvala, Luchazi and Chokwe whence no observations have hitherto been published. The dual role of the rites on one hand internally and on the other externally is pointed out; the sequence of the rites is described and attention is drawn to variations in some aspects between the tribes concerned. Reference is also made to instances where the writer's observations conflict with earlier observations. Trees used in the rites are identified by their botanical names, their symbolism is mentioned and information is given of shortened forms of the rites and rites without the ban on sexual intercourse by participants, both, it is thought, new points. The role of the makishi masks is considered; the teaching of the ceremonies is summarized and examples of the songs are given. Stress is laid on the need to assemble more extensive data from actual observations before speculative interpretation of some features of the symbolism can be considered safe.*

The Lunda, Luvala (Lwena), Chokwe and Luchazi and some Mbunda (free from Lozi acculturation) of the north-western districts of Northern Rhodesia are all characterized by male puberty rites which involve circumcision, a feature which marks them off from all other tribes residing in Northern Rhodesia. Some accounts of the rites of these tribes have already been provided in the past.<sup>1</sup>

The present notes provide data from the Balovale, Kabompo and Mwinilunga districts of Northern Rhodesia, an area not hitherto documented; they were gathered over a period of some ten years during which I was stationed

in these districts, and it is hoped the notes will be useful for comparison with earlier accounts. Data were gathered both by observation and by information in the languages of the participants; the latter fact is mentioned as some earlier accounts suggest upon examination that faulty interpretation may have given rise to inaccuracies.

Most of the previous accounts have been strictly factual; but Gluckman's study breaks new ground by interpreting some of the symbolism of the rites. It provides a stimulating new aspect of the rites although some of the suggestions seem to me to rest upon rather tenuous factual foundations.

Although the broad outlines of the rites present

<sup>1</sup> BAUMANN: *Baessler Archiv*, VX, 1(1932). BORGONJON: *Aequatoria*, VIII (1945) pp. 13-25. DELILLE: *Aequatoria*, VII (1944) pp. 49-55. Their observations refer mainly to the Chokwe in Angola and the Belgian Congo, although Baumann includes some comparative data on the other tribes. — TUCKER (in *Africa*, XIX (1949) pp. 53-60) has provided some data on the Lwimbi in

Angola. GLUCKMAN (in *Social Structure*, 1949) has also recently provided a study entitled "The Role of the Sexes in Wiko Circumcision Ceremonies"; this was based on observations in Barotseland, and though specific indication of the tribes is not given, it clearly refers to Luvala and perhaps Mbunda.



a common pattern, there are many details of divergence between the tribes and also within the tribes in individual rites. For this reason I feel that caution is needed in casting doubts upon discrepancies in earlier accounts where they conflict with one's own observations although attention is drawn to them at times.

#### PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS

The Balovale tribes have had no contacts with Islam even during the period of the slave trade, and circumcision cannot therefore be associated with Islamic influences. Frequent enquiry has failed to reveal any general tradition to explain the source of the practice. Some say that a woman left her child playing on the ground in her garden and it was accidentally circumcised by a sharp grass; when the result was seen, people decided to adopt it for general use. This story is by no means general and can hardly be regarded as a tradition of the origin of the custom. All the tribes involved have a common origin in their dispersion from the south-west Congo basin from Mwachiamvwa, and no doubt brought circumcision with them when they entered Northern Rhodesia. In this connection it is noteworthy that when Lacerda visited Kazembe's Lunda on the Luapula over a hundred and fifty years ago, he found them also circumcising, although, through Bemba acculturation, the practice has long been abandoned there. Kazembe's Lunda also originated from Mwachiamvwa. The normal age of circumcision in the past was higher than it is to-day, and was usually coincident with puberty or just after. The novices remained in seclusion for as long as a year. To-day the rites take place during the cold weather as being the most hygienic period of the year but the novices remain in seclusion for only three or four months. Their age is much younger than in the past, so much so that the sexual aspect of the rites must be of limited significance to them. The novices of to-day are commonly about 8-10 years old and rarely over 14-15. This lowered age and shortened period of seclusion is largely due to such modern influences as the need for school attendance and

the economic pressure of a modern economy which requires a young man to earn money. Nevertheless the ceremonies remain very strongly established: some missions have sought to discourage the rites as pagan and obscene and have provided facilities for circumcision at mission stations, but comparatively few people avail themselves of these facilities.

The rites themselves are known as *mukanda*; an uncircumcised person is *chilima* (or in Lunda *chidima*), *chijiji* or *chizuzu*; a circumcised person *ngalami*. Although the full rites are considered most desirable, it has always been possible for them to take place in a reduced form. This reduced form is known in Lunda as *mpepelanyi*, in Luvale as *chisoolo* and in Luchazi as *chintsoni*. In my own experience these reduced forms of the rite involving perhaps a single individual have occurred where a young novice was ill or injured and could not physically participate in the full and arduous rites; also in one case where the candidate was an elderly man. These reduced rites provide seclusion and the physical operation of circumcision but little or nothing of the "training" and ritual of the full rites. The provision of this shortened rite for special cases, since it has existed from before European culture contacts assumes an important significance when considering the social role of the rites.

The role of the rites in the societies which practice them involves two quite distinct features. Firstly the rites are typical *rites de passage* in which the novices are reborn as men after a symbolic death. During this period the novices are secluded and finally emerge with new adult names. An uncircumcised person remains a child and eats alone or with women since he cannot join grown and circumcised men in their meals. No woman in the past would have sexual relations with him, although to-day the women of these tribes have relaxed this latter taboo, as a result of contacts with uncircumcised tribes, and may now have sexual relations in some cases with uncircumcised men. In the past a circumcised man would not have his food cooked on a fire used to cook food for uncircumcised persons. Combined with the attainment of full manhood,



the rites stress the sexual maturity of the participants. As befits one who has attained to manhood, the novice ensures by the rites that he will be fully capable in sexual capacity.

This aspect of the rites which may be termed the internal one within the tribe places the circumcised in opposition to the women, the uncircumcised being aligned with the latter until after circumcision.

The second aspect of the rites is an external one which serves to place the people who circumcise in contrast with the tribes who do not. The state of being uncircumcised is a subject of constant comment among the Balovale tribes in their references to other tribes. One of the commonest forms of reviling a person is to refer to him as uncircumcised by alluding to *waza* (dirt under the foreskin), considered to be inherent in all the uncircumcised. Even animals are the subject of comment according to whether their penis resembles one which has been circumcised or not. Uncircumcised persons may not visit the rites, and cases have occurred to my personal knowledge where uncircumcised Africans of other tribes have been seized and circumcised for venturing too close to the ceremonies.

Gluckman suggests that this opposition between the circumcised and uncircumcised is emphasized in Barotseland, because the Wiko there live amongst uncircumcised Lozi who despise them. I doubt if this is so, for throughout their contacts with other tribes the Balovale tribes always pose the opposition of the physical differences between them, without any question of any inferiority complex. The political situation in Barotseland may have still further accentuated this fact, but it has not created it. The circumcised form a group whose physical state transcends their tribal differences in contrast with all uncircumcised tribes. As a result the Ovimbundu in Angola in recent decades have widely adopted circumcision through contacts with their neighbours; members of the Balovale tribes on the railway line in Northern Rhodesia may be heard to speak with approval of the Yao who circumcise, although through Islamic influences. It must be remembered that the Balovale tribes have a long history of

contacts with other tribes; this opposition of themselves and the uncircumcised is no recent result of migrant labour through industrialization in Africa. The Chokwe and Luvale were in contact with the Ovimbundu for over a century before industry appeared in Africa, although all the early writers make no reference to circumcision among the Ovimbundu at that period, or else state that they do not circumcise.

It is perhaps rather pointless to consider which of these aspects of the rites is the more important. Whilst the rites are in progress, clearly the internal aspects of *rites de passage* and sexual maturity are uppermost in the minds of the participants. On the other hand the physical alignment of the circumcised opposed to the uncircumcised continues to exist throughout the lives of the initiated. The fact that reduced forms of the rites have always existed becomes of importance in this connection. These reduced rites would appear to show that although a person might not be able to undergo the esoteric ritual, it was nevertheless considered essential that the physical state of circumcision should be attained. This stress upon the physical fact goes well with the weak internal political organization of these tribes which further find the normal bonds provided by kinship insufficient in themselves to bind society effectively together. Circumcision steps in to provide a further basis for group cohesion. This function of circumcision must be viewed together with the effects of the *mungongi* rites of a similar nature, and the frequent use of blood friendship and similar compacts. Novices who have participated together in the same circumcision ceremony are thereby provided also with a close link which endures throughout their lives outside kinship.

The physical opposition of the circumcised and uncircumcised is reinforced by other features of the rites. The ritual is secret and varies in many details among the Balovale tribes themselves. This aspect of the rites is constantly emphasized by reiteration of the need to preserve the secrets both from women and from the uncircumcised. Evil will befall the betrayer of the secrets. Gluckman reads this aspect of the rites as emphasizing the fertility aspect of the ceremony and says that



impotence is the main sanction of the lodge, and idiocy or madness is secondary. He does not however mention leprosy which seems to me the most often mentioned and greatest sanction. It is, I think, necessary to stress two aspects of the sanctions of the lodge. On the one hand the rites confer manhood and fertility and failure to comply with the rules of the ceremonies in this respect will result in failure to achieve full manhood and fertility—hence the reference to impotence. Secondly the rites provide a basis for group cohesion which will be weakened if the basis for this cohesion is broadcast to the uninitiated, hence the sanction of leprosy or madness for revealing the secrets.

I would therefore submit that the rites have two equally important and complimentary functions, one internal within the tribal society, the attainment of manhood and fertility which is stressed in the accounts of Gluckman and others, and the other external, the source of new types of group cohesion—both cohesion between individuals within the tribe but outside the ties of kinship and still more important, cohesion as a body of circumcised persons in contrast with all the uncircumcised.

I have thus far said little of Gluckman's thesis that the rites exhibit symbolism of the opposition and collaboration of the sexes. There is I think little doubt that the interpretation which he has propounded goes far beyond anything which the Balovale tribes are conscious of, and some English-speaking members of these tribes to whom I have shown his study found difficulty in accepting parts of it. This does not of course mean that the interpretation of the symbolism is invalid. In some of the following paragraphs I shall refer to particular points where my evidence of fact does not wholly square with some of his interpretations. In particular it may be well to say here that I have never persuaded any member of these tribes to admit that the circumcision rites are "an agreement between men and women" to quote Gluckman's own words. In my experience any suggestion that women play an important role in the rites is always hotly disputed by the men and the women do not claim it for themselves. This does not prevent the women from

in fact playing an important role, but rather detracts from that conscious agreement which is quoted by Gluckman. Future studies of the rites *in situ* will in any case do well to keep this question constantly in view. In this connection I would venture to stress the desirability of recording actual vernacular texts of what the participants say about the significance of any parts of the rites.

Reference was made above to the fact that comparatively few persons avail themselves of facilities for circumcision at mission stations. This may seem all the more surprising in view of the fact that reduced forms of the rites are permitted by tradition in any case. The type of circumcision provided by missions varies from simple operations performed at the mission to an attempt to meet indigenous practices by holding a shortened camp in the bush divested of its pagan and sexual elements. Lack of any very widespread enthusiasm for these facilities can be ascribed to the fact that Christianity has made little impression upon the masses of the people, and also to the fact that attendance at the traditional shortened forms of the rites was a misfortune due to some special cause and not in itself considered desirable. The background of the full rites as providing the elements of group cohesion described above are highly prized, and whilst a person who has been circumcised at a mission is acceptable in the physical qualifications which he fulfills, he is still rather a joke among those circumcised at the full rites, because he does not understand common allusions to the full rites in conversation. He lacks the body of esoteric knowledge which can only be acquired from the full rites, although he has probably acquired a little of it by simply living in the society which has such rites.

The full rites have on the other hand not been without changes due to modern conditions; bandages may now be used instead of leaves to put on the wound; the duration of the seclusion has been shortened and the age of the novices lowered to meet modern conditions. The *makishi* masks have become more secularized and are no longer believed to be were-creatures, because women now know they are just men. In short the



rites have shown no disposition to decay under present conditions, and have shown many features in which they can adapt themselves to the modern era, and still be highly prized by society. Under these circumstances it seems unlikely that they will be easily supplanted by the provision of non-pagan surgical facilities.

#### PREPARATION FOR THE RITES

The initiative for holding the rites is taken at the village level when a village has a number of youths who are ready for circumcision. It is considered likely to bring ill luck if a village contains too many uncircumcised persons. Other neighbouring villages are invited to bring their candidates if they have any ready. The man whose son gives rise to the holding of the rites is known as *chijika-mukanda* (setter up of the circumcision). At Balovale and at Mwinilunga where tribal chiefs exist, the latter are asked to bless the impending rites, and they make invocation for the novices. Among the Lunda this is known as *kwokola kesi* (taking an ember from the fire), a purely symbolic name since the chief does not provide any fire, but merely white clay with which the novices are marked before the rites. In Barotseland according to Gluckman the permission of both British and Lozi authorities is sought before the rites are held. In the districts to which my notes refer the permission of the British authorities is never sought.

To ensure successful rites the services must be sought of a person who has the appropriate magic; this magic is kept in a bundle, hence he is known in Lunda as "master of the bundle" or in the other tribes as *nganga-mukanda* — medicine man of the circumcision. This man may in some cases perform the actual circumcision, but more often the circumcisers are separate individuals skilled in performing the operation, and known as *mbimbi* in Lunda or *chikeji* in Luvale. Each novice must also be provided with a keeper, *chilombola*, who remains with him during his seclusion to look after him and teach him. This keeper is a person who has already passed through the rites.

Before the rites commence, both novices and their mothers are placed under a number of food taboos; these vary somewhat in different areas; examples of them are prohibitions on eating the following:

bushbuck, because its spotted coat recalls leprosy, one of the sanctions of the lodge for a breach of its rules;

genet, because it is also spotted; the same reason;

the tail or head of rodents: the tail of a rodent will cause long thick gouts of blood from the circumcision wound, and its head will cause the novice gnawing pains;

chillies: lest the novice experience great pain from his wound;

*kaloya*, a catfish with a smooth slimy skin, because eating it will cause the wounds to remain like its skin and heal slowly.

Throughout the rites the *nganga-mukanda* must ensure that dangers to the novices are averted; there is the possible danger from witches but in particular it is important to ensure quick and good healing of the wounds; the novices must also emerge fully capable sexually and impotence must be averted. Breaches of the rules of the lodge may also bring impotence, madness or leprosy on the novices.

The night before the commencement of the rites is occupied with a dance which is called *kusan-gisa funda*; the bundle of medicines of the *nganga-mukanda* is carried about on a flat basket (*lwalo*), and handled by the men participating to ensure that they will enjoy its protection; the women though present do not handle it. This period is marked by great freedom and obscene gestures are freely indulged in and individuals curse each other without offence. Gluckman mentions these latter aspects of the dance but not its place in the rites by conveying the protection of the *funda*.

Other preludes to the lodge concern the preparation of the masks; in some instances only the *katotola* who carries off the novices is made available at this stage; this mask may be bought or actually made before the rites.



An old woman, *nyachifwa*, past the age of child bearing is usually appointed; she helps the *katotola* to pound medicines before the rites to put on the wounds of the candidates, and as a rule she keeps a cooking fire to which the mothers of the novices bring food and cook it for their children. In some Luchazi lodges, however, food is brought from the village.

The novices are also warned at this stage of the need to observe the rules of the lodge; one song sung for this purpose runs (Lunda):

*Hiwadya nshimba ninkala unadyi, wawwala nshimba, wadikolomwena.* (You have eaten genet and mongoose and are wearing a genet skin, you have brought injury on yourself.)

At the same time their fears are allayed; they are told that there will be nothing uncomfortable in the rites; they will eat off plates, sleep on beds and only have to jump over a bush of *muwangwa* (*Paropsia brazzeana*). The references to beds and plates are references to features of the actual lodge conditions where these names are applied to rather different conditions.

Most of the rites involve shaving the hair on the heads of the novices at this stage, but not in all Lunda rites apparently. In the Luvala ceremonies of which I have data, on the night before circumcision, the *nganga-mukanda* hands a piece of white chalk to the mother of the novice who is initiator of the rite; she places it in her vagina and has connection with her husband, the *chijika-mukanda*, and next morning gives it back to the *nganga-mukanda* who uses it to mark the novices before and after the operation, to guard against the approach of those who have had sexual relations. This chalk is kept by the *nganga* for use at successive rites which he attends. Gluckman ascribes the ownership of this chalk to the circumciser in his observations.

#### FIRST PHASE OF THE RITES

Other accounts have described the essentials of how the novices are carried off by the *katotola likishi* and circumcised. I propose to comment on only a few aspects of this stage of the rites.

The novice is known as *mwadi* (Lunda), *ka-*

*ndanji* (Lwena, Chokwe) or *kandanda* (Luchazi). At the operation the novice is held by a person skilled in this work, known as *chifukaminu* in Lunda, *chihungu* in the other languages. Some accounts suggest that the fathers of the novices hold them; this is unusual and would only occur if the fathers were considered suitably experienced. The fathers normally sit some distance away, lest, it is said, they feel sorry for their children and might strike the circumciser. Among the Lunda, the novices after circumcision are placed sitting on the trunk of a *mukula* tree (*Pterocarpus angolensis*). This tree has reddish glutinous exudations from its bark which in many rites are associated with blood and fertility, hence its name from the root *-kula*, to be mature. Among the other tribes the novices sit on wooden blocks which they afterwards take with them to the lodge to sit on; these are especially often from a tree known as *mupepe* (*Hymenocardia mollis*), whose tough wood is regarded in many contexts in the rites as conducive to the development of a penis with a strong and enduring erection. Other trees used for this purpose at times are *musalia* (*Pseudolachnostylis* sp.), *munyenye* (*Swartzia madagascariensis*). In addition to their tough wood, all produce fruits which are regarded as symbolic of fertility and reproduction.

The blood of the novices, as they sit thus, is allowed to drip into a piece of grey ant-hill earth, suitably scooped out to receive it; the foreskins are also placed in it. The disposal of this piece of ant-hill varies considerably at different lodges. The commonest Luvala and Luchazi methods of my acquaintance are to tuck the pieces of ant-hill up in the branches of the lodge at the place known as *ndambi*; there they remain until the novices have healed and passed the *chikula*; then each *chilombola* separately buries his novice's receptacle in some place near the *ndambi*, unknown to the others. In other cases, and commonly among the Luchazi the *chilombola* takes the receptacle and hides it far away in the bush after the *chikula* rite. In Gluckman's account, the receptacles are kept until the end of the rites and then buried under water or under a path where many people pass. I have no observations of this.



If anything happens to one of the receptacles before the *chikula*, it is feared that the novice concerned may be impotent or infertile. The foreskins in the receptacle may be stolen since they are regarded as medicine suitable for making a charm to render an adulterer unable to have an erection. In this case the medicine is placed in a horn at the bed of the owner when he leaves his wife. In some cases the *vilombola* tease the novices that the foreskins are mixed with the food of the latter so that they eat them. The novice who gave rise to the holding of the rite is the senior of them, irrespective of his age relative to the others; he is known as *sakambungo* in Luvale, and throughout the seclusion, acts as spokesman for the rest if they have any complaints to make to the officials of the lodge. Next to him in importance is the last novice who is called *sakasula*. The others have no special name or status.

The place of circumcision is known as *fwilo* (in Luvale) or a similar derivation in other languages, denoting the place of dying, since it is there that the novices have undergone their symbolic death. In earlier days at least, even after the novices had emerged and were grown men, they avoided passing over this spot which was regarded as a grave yard. Hence the act of circumcision was euphemistically referred to as "killing". The strict terms for it are *adika* (Lunda) and *enga* (other languages). This avoidance of the *fwilo* in the past was rendered easy because the lodge was placed at a considerable distance from the village and villages moved more often than to-day. The *fwilo* is to-day no longer avoided so strictly after the novices have emerged, and indeed is often so close to the village, that avoidance would be an impossibility.

The officials of the lodge are the keepers (*vilombola*), their assistants known as *tulombolachika* who draw water and bring food for the novices, and miscellaneous others with no fixed duties known as *vambwemachilya-milunda* (literally "eaters of the top mush").

### The Lodge

The lodge itself is known as *mukanda* or in Lunda as *ngula*. The first night after the operation

the novices and other officials sleep in the open, and the next day construct the lodge of branches. Any timber may be used. The lodges at Balovale and Kabompo are open to the sky, those at Mwinilunga usually roofed over.

In the past the lodge was built a considerable distance from the village, and normally out of sight of the village though within hearing. To-day, it is commonly among the Luvale and Luchazi very close to the village and within view. Gluckman's picture of the antithesis of lodge and village, with the woman at the village in sight of the lodge which is forbidden to them needs a little reconsideration in the light of this. In the past this antithesis was lessened by the fact that the lodge was not in sight; to-day, as some remark, "the lodge is so near the village that those in the lodge have to lower their voices to prevent the women at the village hearing what is being said".

The lodge itself is an oblong enclosure; there are some differences in the construction between the tribes concerned.

1. *Entrances*: Luvale lodge has two entrances in the front, one for novices and one for *vilombola*. Luchazi lodge has two entrances, one in front for novices and one opposite at back for *vilombola*. Lunda and Chokwe lodges have a single entrance for all, in the front.

2. *Sleeping places*: In all the lodges the *vilombola* sleep in a row along the inside of the front wall and the novices in a row along the backwall. The novices sleep in pens of sticks, in pairs; these pens are known in Luvale as *mbangalakachi*; *sakambungo* occupies one at one end and *sakasula* one at the other end with the other novices in between. Fires are lit between these pens at night to keep the novices warm. They are called *majiko* or in Luchazi *vyoto*. These pens are commonly referred to by people as the "houses" (*mazuvo*) of the novices. In a Lunda lodge the individual fires of the novices are placed down the centre of the lodge and not between the pens.

3. *Chisushilo* or *chitekelelu* (Lunda), the place where the novices urinate. In Lunda lodges this is a stake of *mubanga* tree (*Afrormosia angolensis*) stuck in ground outside the lodge. In Luvale,



Luchazi and Chokwe there are two such places, one outside and one inside the lodge, with a stick round which ashes from the fires of the novices are heaped. In the last three, the stick is taken from the following trees:

*muwangwa* (*Paropsia brazzeana*); *musole* (*Vangueriopsis lanciflora*); *mufuko* (*Ochna pulchra*); *mupepe* (*Hymenocardia mollis*); *munyenye*, *mutete* (*Swartzia madagascariensis*); *musalya* (*Pseudolachnostylis* sp.).

The choice of these trees is due to their hard, tough wood, symbolic of erect penis and their fruits symbolic of fertility.

It will be noted from the provision of the *chisushilo* points, that Luvale, Luchazi and Chokwe have two according to whether they are outside (during the day) or inside (at night) the lodge; the Lunda have to go outside at nights to urinate. If the novices are out in the bush during the day and wish to urinate, they do so against one of the appointed trees listed above.

4. *The ritual fire (lwowa)*: The word *lwowa* is one of the esoteric terms of the rites and must not be used among women; hence among Luvale, Chokwe and many Luchazi the fire is referred to as *njamba* (elephant). Lunda lodges have only one *lwowa*, outside the lodge; the other lodges have two, one inside and one outside. These are termed the male elephant (inside) and the female (outside). Gluckman sees the male and female elephants as symbolic of a combination of male and female principles in the lodge. This seems to me to need further exploration, since some lodges have only one *lwowa* and do not distinguish male and female elephants. The *lwowa* runs lengthwise and the *nganga-mukanda* places at either end of it a magic peg (*shizo*) to avert evil; no one may sit at the ends of the *lwowa*, only along the long sides; to jump over it is forbidden; when passing round it, the *vilombola* must pass to the right and the novices to the left of it. It serves as a gathering point for the occupants of the lodge; they warm themselves by it and stand by it to sing and cheer. Nothing must be burnt in it or cooked on it; it must not be used e.g. to light tobacco.

5. *Mukeleko*: This is an arch of *mukula* branches; one is placed round each entry place into the lodge; another is placed outside beyond the outside *lwowa*; no one may pass under the latter, but when food is brought from the village, a little is stuck on this outside arch before the food is given to the novices. If a *kalombolachika* should inadvertently pass under the arch when bringing food to the novices, the food will be thrown away, lest it render the novices impotent. The *mukula* tree is symbolic of fertility; hence the novices pass under it in entering or leaving the lodge, and the food is blessed by it before eating. Each arch is twisted with a grass known as *vika-kaviye*; this is to avert the familiars of witches and is similarly used on other occasions in the village, when it is necessary to avert them.

6. *Ndambi*: This is a point in the back wall of the lodge marked by a projecting forked stick. It is a forbidden ritual spot. The novices must not look at it and hence when entering the lodge must lower their heads. Any food left over by the novices is taken and thrown over the *ndambi*. Whilst the novices are outside the lodge during the daytime, they must always face away from the *ndambi*. The latter is symbolic of the childhood they have left behind them. The food thrown over the *ndambi* is known as *ndambalo*. In Luchazi lodges there is no stick in the lodge over which remains of food are thrown and the *chilombola* or *kalombolachika* who takes the food passes round the outside of the lodge and throws it away at the back behind the entry of the *vilombola*.

7. *Mwima*: A stake placed in the lodge near the side wall; on it is placed a flat basket containing medicines provided by the *ngangamukanda*, the unwashed knife of the circumciser, a small calabash of medicine which had been used by the *nganga* on the day of circumcision to anoint the backs of the novices, and the red wing feather of a lorie (*Tauraco schalowi* or *Musophaga rossae*). The novices must not look at the *mwima*. When the novices have healed and the *chikula* ceremony has taken place, the knife is removed. The following variation in the *mwima* has been noted; in a



Lunda lodge it is placed outside the lodge at the back near the *ndambi*.

8. *Chishingo*: A stick of *mukula* or *mukenge* (*Combretum zeyheri*) which is used daily upon which the novices are sworn to secrecy to preserve the secrets of the lodge. The symbolism in these trees here is that the *mukula* has red, blood-like exudations, and the *mukenge* a torn and ragged bark, both indicating disease which will befall the betrayer of the secrets. The latter is likened in particular to leprosy.

9. *Muyombo* (*Lannea stuhlmannii*): In some lodges the *mwima* is placed on a *muyombo* stake which is specifically the *muyombo* of the senior novice and placed behind his bed. The *muyombo* is used in villages for invocations to ancestral spirits, but in the lodge no such regular invocations seem to occur, although beer or meat killed in the bush may be drunk or cut up there as the case may be, by the officials of the lodge. This appears to be more particularly a feature of Luchazi lodges.

#### *Life in the lodge during the first phase*

I use the term first phase to denote the period of the lodge before all the novices have recovered from their operation. During this period the novices wear no clothes; their penis is enclosed in a leaf tied with bark rope. Neither must be called by the ordinary term for leaf or bark rope; the esoteric terms in Luvalé are *chikondo* for the leaf and *jizako* for the bark rope. The leaf is commonly from *munyumba* (*Isoberlinia paniculata*) or from *mutowo* (probably *I. tomentosa*). If it desired to enlarge the penis of the novice, a leaf of *musuhwa* (botanical name not known) is used. The bark rope is taken from *pundu-kaina* (*Grewia flavescens*). The wounds are dressed by the *vilombola* outside the lodge and normally just at one corner of it; the novice must not look at his wound whilst it being dressed.

If a wound does not heal well, the *chilombola* says that a *chihungu* (Bateleur Eagle) will come and eat the bad tissue or pus; in fact the *chilombola* himself cleanses it by introducing it into the fruit

of a *mukolo* tree (*Strychnos* sp.). This is known as *ndachihungu* alluding to the Bateleur Eagle.

At night the novices sleep with a stick to keep their legs from chafing the wound; this stick is always called "dog" and must not be termed by its ordinary vernacular name, *pango*.

No women or uncircumcised persons may visit the lodge, but an infant of either sex who is too young to speak is certainly in Luvalé and Luchazi lodges permitted to go there to-day; in some Chokwe and Lunda lodges apparently this is not permitted. A stranger may be required to exhibit his penis if there is doubt as to whether he is circumcised; this is termed simply *kulovola* (bring out), except in Lunda where a special term, *kutoholola*, is applied.

Each novice during this period carries a little packet of medicines over his shoulder; the senior novice in addition has a special packet on his bed, as has the novice who sleeps with him. During this period the novices play with the penes of the *vilombola* and *tulombolachika*; this is considered to hasten healing; the novices also hope that by so doing, their own penes will grow large and strong. The same is done to visitors to the lodge to help the novices to heal.

The novices must leave the lodge before dawn and not re-enter until dark; this ensures that they do not look at the *ndambi* or *mwima*. When the novices emerge, they warm themselves by the outside fire; later their wounds are dressed and they then spend the day away from the lodge and out of sight of women. When they hear a *kalombolachika* calling as he brings food, they come and stand by the outside fire with their backs to the lodge and sing. The mush is divided up and placed on *muwangwa* leaves, the "plates" of the novices. Hence during this period one may say *tundanji vali hamafo* (the novices are on leaves), i.e. they have not yet healed, and are still eating off leaves. Whilst they eat, each has a twig of *mupepe* tucked behind his ear. When the remnants are taken and thrown over the *ndambi*, the novices simultaneously throw away their twigs.

The novices may not wash during this period; the "blood friendship" which is implicit in those who have shared the rite together is commonly



interpreted as being symbolized by the fact that they have eaten each others uncleanness during this period when eating together.

Gluckman refers to the novices being grouped in pairs as man and wife; this applies to the first pair, *sakambungo* and his wife, and the last pair *sakasula* and his wife; possibly Gluckman's impression was created by a lodge with only four novices since I have never seen a Luvale or Luchazi lodge where the intervening novices were so grouped. Gluckman has well brought out the role of the women in the period after dark, when the novices are singing and shrilling, and the women sit outside the village answering and do not retire to sleep until the novices have ceased singing. I have nothing to add to his vivid picture of this aspect of the rites.

Contact with fire is forbidden to the novices before they have healed; they may not gather firewood and may not touch dead embers of fire or stir up their fires at night themselves; the attendants must collect the firewood and at night if his fire is low, the novice must arouse his *chilombola* to stir it up. Contact with fire is deemed likely to impede effective healing.

I deal below with aspects of the general teaching which occurs throughout the lodge; apart from this general teaching, the first phase is considered of special danger because the wounds of the novices are not yet healed, and special attention during this period must be directed to ensuring healing both by medication and by magical aids and taboos.

Previous accounts stress that before the novices have healed, their parents, the *vilombola* and other participants must not have sexual intercourse with a woman. Gluckman alludes to this feature of the rites as one of the ways in which the normal life of the village is upset, and compares it to other types of ban on sexual relations. It is necessary therefore to point out that for at least twenty five years, especially among the Luvale and to some extent among the Luchazi there have existed two forms of the rites. The *mukanda wachijila* or *wawwvisu* with the ban on sexual relations, and the *mukanda wasanga* or *wakuhya* at which there is no such ban. I do not know of any Lunda

rites which have adopted this form without the sexual taboo.

In the rites without the ban, the chalk of the *nganga-mukanda* is said to protect the novices from ill effects, but in fact the change goes further than this. In some lodges where there is no sexual ban, the *vilombola* are specifically required to have had intercourse the night before they come in the morning to dress the wounds of the novices. Thus the taboo has been fully reversed.

The facts that the rites occur in these two forms raises a number of questions. The atmosphere of both types of rite needs study and comparison in the light of Gluckman's description of the tensions which exist at the rite accompanied by the sexual ban. It would be useful to get data of the relative frequency of the two types of rite; my data suggests a spread at Balovale and Kabompo of the rite without the sexual ban, but is inadequate to justify a generalization. It seems likely that the rite without the ban is a new development, though I have data that it is at least twenty five years old; except that it makes life easier I have heard no explanation for the change, and I do not find this explanation very satisfactory when applied to a solemn ritual. However it may reflect the elasticity of these people to adapt their customs to new conditions and ideas rather than abandon them. If so, this is a further proof of the vitality of the rites. In earlier studies I have drawn attention of this adaptability of the Balovale tribes in connection with witchcraft beliefs and in the *mahamba* spirit possessions.

## SECOND PHASE OF THE RITES

The second phase of the rites commences when all the novices have healed. The whole company of novices must all heal first. Their healing takes place irregularly but as each one heals, he is taken by his *chilombola* and allowed to light his own fire; as he does so, his own and other *vilombola* strike him three or four times across the back with switches. He may now also handle an axe or a knife or a calabash, which were all taboo until healing; he may now collect firewood near



the lodge; but he still does not wash or abandon his leaves to eat off. He goes into the bush to collect fruits of *kavulamumi* (*Maprounea africana*) which he squeezes over his scar, rubbing the juice in; this to make the red scar turn black. He is also allowed to wear a piece of cloth tied between the legs as a protection to his healed scar. His recovery must not be announced to the village. As the days pass the others heal and are treated likewise.

On the day of the close of the first phase, the *vilombola* and novices and others at the lodge gather much firewood, taking care not to be seen by the women lest the latter realize what is happening; at night when they sing, they shout to the women at the village that they are not going to sleep quickly to-night and the singing is protracted. Suddenly one of the *vilombola* climbs on the top of the lodge and shouts *shimba nalondo* (the genet has climbed); this is then repeated for each novice. There is then great excitement at the village; the *vilombola* have taken steps to prevent the women from seeing the novices; in some Luchazi lodges this is done by keeping them inside the lodge and blocking the entries; in other Luvala lodges, the novices are outside but the path to the village is screened with mats. If the women try to approach, the *makishi* rush out and drive them back. Meanwhile all the novices are standing on one leg, rattling together two pieces of stick known as *mingongi*; if the women should get near, they hide the sticks and just clap since they tell the women that the *mingongi* are human bones; its identity as sticks is one of the secrets of the lodge. The novices must remain standing on one leg until each mother has sent a fowl to the respective *chilombola* as a present.

As soon as it is dawn, the novices are taken off to dig up the roots of *mutundu* (*Afromomum* sp.) out of which they beat the fibres to make themselves kilts known as *mazombo*. This digging must be referred to as digging up skunks (*kufula tungamba*).

Then the novices are taken to the river to wash; this is called *kulyachisa tundanji kulwiji* (making the novices tread in the river). The

*makishi* accompany them for the mothers try to get near as they hear the song of the novices and the *makishi* drive them off. On the bank a fire is lit and each novice must jump over it as he throws himself into the water to wash; as he jumps over the fire, the *vilombola* strike him with their switches. While at the river, the novices mark off with sticks a place where they will now come to draw water, lest the woman should chance upon them. The novices now go into the bush and catch small mammals or birds for their *vilombola*; they may go and eat near their village; this place is known as the *mbumbulu* of the novice. Adult and child bearing women must not come to him there but old women or young women below puberty or just at puberty may speak to him there. As he comes to the *mbumbulu*, the novice shrills twice as a warning that he is there.

Wherever the novices pass at this time they sing a song:

*Ndonji — ee lila;*

*ee — ndonji;*

*kwahichila kandanji kwazuma,*

*kwahichila chilima kwahola.*

(*Ndonji*, cry out; yes, *Ndonji*; where a novice has passed is warm, where an uncircumcised person has passed is cold.)

The woman now begin to prepare beer for the *chikula* ceremony; when it is ready, it is taken to the lodge and the *nganga-mukanda* takes some of it and washes the blood from the knife which has been lying in the basket in the lodge; the knife is now taken away by its owner, the circumciser. The remaining medicines in the basket are left there unless they are wanted to initiate another lodge elsewhere.

The novices now spend much less time singing, and no longer sing at the setting and rising of the sun; they spend much time learning their dances for the final emergence; when they go abroad during the day, they may be recalled by a drum with a distinctive beat which is syllableized: *pitipiti tundanji*.

When it is decided to close the rites, preparations are made to brew beer. The *nganga-mukanda* is warned. The *katotola likishi* is sent to help the



women to soak the grain; they must not start without him. In the evening of the final rites, the *vilombola* and novices carefully gather up the *mingongi* sticks and any other small objects used at the lodge and burn them.

Before dawn, the novices still wearing their bark kilts and now arrayed in bark-cloth caps (*vikuku*) flee from the lodge which is burned by the old men as they sit drinking their beer. The novices must not look back at the blazing lodge. The novices wait until morning when, painted with red and white clay and with rattles on their legs in addition to their caps and kilts, they enter the village and dance. There are various types of dance depending on the tribe; Luvala and Luchazi refer to these as *kuhunga* (dancing so that the kilt stands out from the body); *kundeka* (movements of the shoulders); *seketa* (mainly Chokwe, with separate jerkings of either buttock); *pepetenu* (Hoopoe) with movements of hands to imitate the crest of the hoopoe.

In the late afternoon the *nganga-mukanda* assembles the mothers and exhibits the novices safe and uninjured and collects his present for each of them in turn. Then the *vilombola* appear and likewise collect their presents.

Next morning the novice in the past would all go and work for a while in the garden of the *chijika-mukanda* but this is often now not done. Then they are taken by the *vilombola* to the river where the kilts are buried under the water; the novice must never again pass over this spot. Then they are dressed in new clothes and shaved and brought back to the village. The *chilombola* warns his novice that he should now seek for a woman and have connection with her to remove the taint of *chikula*, which still surrounds him until he has tested his sexual powers; when he has connection with this woman, he must flee quickly after he has finished and never have *coitus* with her again. If the novice is too young to find a woman easily the *chilombola* takes him into the bush and carves a vagina in a cucumber or small pumpkin and the novice has connection with this to remove the taint of the *chikula*. The cucumber is known as *kashinakazi* (the old woman). The place where the novices are shaved

and dressed in their new clothes is known as *kateu*; it is there that they assume their new adult names.

#### THE MAKISHI MASKS

Good accounts of the individual *makishi* and photographs have been given elsewhere, especially by Baumann; it may be observed that while some of the *makishi* are peculiar to one tribe, there has been much borrowing between them and in some cases individual *makishi* cannot be assigned to one tribe. In particular, a number of *makishi* not to be found in Mwinilunga, Balovale and Kabompo, seem regular features in Barotseland and it would seem likely that these are due to Mbunda influences.

Some accounts of the *makishi* have referred to them as spirits of the ancestors, and Gluckman in his study in particular has elaborated this theme to present the *makishi* as the ancestors who are the guardians of the lodge, and whose edicts enforce its rites and rules. Whilst the blessing and good will of the ancestors are certainly sought by invocation to them before the rites, strong evidence for this interpretation of the *makishi* seems to be lacking. On the other hand, there does seem to be evidence that faulty interpretation may have created this impression.

The Luvala say *natuya nakusangula likishi* (we are going to bring to life a *likishi*). The verb *kusangula* means to bring back from the grave to life; *kusanguka* is used of a were-creature which has risen from a grave. One does not use *kusanguka* of an ancestral spirit which is an invisible entity and in any case does not reside in a grave. The Lunda say of the *makishi*: *avumbukanga kukufwa, wowu antu afwili dehi* (they rise up from being dead and buried, they are people who died long ago). Now the creature which does this is a supernatural monster such as a man who died and comes back to earthly form as a lion or some other dangerous beast to prey upon the living. The *likishi* is in fact a *chisanguke*. Baumann's texts also reflect this, though the point does not seem to have been fully appreciated by him.

The names of some of the *makishi*, such as



*katotoji*, *chikuza*, *ngondo* are relevant here; these names apply to the familiars of wizards created by magical processes, and the *makishi* to which they are applied are intended to be representations of them.

The root *-kisi* which occurs in *likishi* seems to be the same root which occurs north-west as far as the lower Congo, and denotes some object endowed with superhuman and supernatural powers, through some person who has died and thereafter taken a new body adapted to a new mode of life.

A glance at the *makishi* shows most of them as grotesque and hideous distortions of a human being in their appearance; they provide the lodge with a horrific element which serves to terrify the novices until after circumcision they are admitted to the secret and learn to make *makishi* themselves. The *makishi* also terrify and drive away women from the rites.

As has often been pointed out, in the past women were supposed not to know that a man was inside the *likishi* costume; to-day although they know it, the Luvala often laugh at some Mbunda *makishi* costumes which are roughly made and do not cover the lower legs or feet of the dancer, so that he is at once revealed as a human being. Yet even now I doubt if any woman would handle a *likishi* costume and in Nkoya villages (the Nkoya do not circumcise), people object if a *likishi* dancer should leave his costume in their village and go off somewhere.

The idea that the *makishi* represent ancestral spirits has probably been aided because the men say of some of the fierce ritual masks that they are occupied by a deceased forebear of the novice. If the novice has been brought to the rites at the instance of his father, the *likishi* is identified with a paternal forebear, if at the instance of his mother's brother, the *likishi* is identified with a maternal forebear. These forebears are regarded as *visanguke* who have been awakened from the grave, and not as ancestral spirits who watch over the kindred. All informants are emphatic that the *likishi* remains a were-creature or *ndumba yamutu* in spite of being said to be occupied by the deceased forebear. Each novice has a *likishi*

occupied in this way, some may have two or three; these *makishi* are always the fierce ones which frighten the women and do not play with them; such as *linyampa*, *kalelwa*, *chikuza*, *ngaji*, *chizaluke*. Other *makishi* who frolic freely with the women do not enjoy the privilege of being occupied by deceased forebears. They are just *makishi*; these include the *katotola* who carried off the novices, *mwana-pwevo*, *ndondo*, *chileya*, *kandanji*. Only senior persons may wear the costumes of these *makishi* occupied by the deceased forebears; the lesser *makishi* who play with women may be occupied by less important persons such as the *tulombolachika*. In the case of the *makishi* occupied by the forebears of a novice, the actual wearer of the costume need not be a relative. Since all the *makishi* are not occupied by the deceased and those which are so occupied, are the fierce *makishi* who do not play with the women, it seems more convincing to regard the occupation by deceased forebears as designed to give verisimilitude to the idea of the *visanguke* by introducing *visanguke* within the kinship group; this will still further frighten the women. In contrast, the *makishi* which play with the women do not require to be invested with this quality since they do not frighten women.

This explanation of the *makishi* seems to square with the statements which have been quoted about them as occupied by deceased forebears but does not imply that they are in fact the ancestral spirits of the kinship group to the extent that has sometimes been quoted.

I know of no evidence to support statements that the *nyachifwa* helps to make *makishi*; the novices may be sent to dig up roots for bark rope but they are not present when the *makishi* are made; the *makishi* which play with women may be made by *tulombolachika*, but the senior *makishi* are only made by senior persons. The novices may help to dress the *tulombolachika* in the costumes of *makishi* which play with women but must not look inside the headpiece. In the case of the senior *makishi*, the novices may not help to dress the wearer, though the *tulombolachika* may help to dress him.

It will be noted that the role of the *makishi*



is a two-fold one, according to the particular *likishi* involved. There are those which frighten away the women and are fierce and regarded with awe by the novices even though they know they are merely men. These are *makishi* occupied by deceased forebears. Secondly there are *makishi* which joke and play with the women, going freely to the village and indulging in ribald talk and obscene remarks with them. These *makishi* may be regarded as a foil to the fierce type. Gluckman has drawn a picture of the tension which exists between lodge and village and this is relieved by the frivolities of the *makishi* which play with the women. If a circumcision rite should lack the *chileya* and *ndondo* to play with the women, the latter will complain that they have not had their enjoyment from the rites.

The senior *makishi* are worn by specially skilled persons who make a profession of it; a father may summon such a person from a considerable distance to come and wear the costume occupied by a deceased forebear of his son. If the professional *likishi*-dancer does not come up to expectations in his performance, the father may hit him or refuse to pay him on the ground that he has brought the novice's *likishi* into contempt by his poor performance.

#### THE TEACHING OF THE LODGE

The teaching of the novices may be grouped and illustrated under the following heads.

1. *General discipline.* This is typified by the strict adherence to the rules of the lodge and may be considered in conjunction also with the hardships which have to be endured. Until the scars have healed the novices may not wash; they sleep on the bare ground, and endure cold since the rites take place at the coldest period of the year. Before dawn cold water is poured onto the earth at the edge of the ashes of the *lwowa*, and the novices have to push their fingers into it. This is called *kuhinda vukolo* (digging sweet potatoes) in Luchazi.

The novices are beaten by the *vilombola* for breaches of good behaviour and most evenings

as a matter of course as they enter the lodge. Breaches of the taboos of the lodge are punished in the same way. If the novices are sitting and a *chilombola* stamps his foot or throws down a piece of firewood, all must leap to their feet; if this happens when they are eating, they must leap up with their food in their hands; if they leave it on the ground, it will be thrown away and they will go hungry.

After the novices have healed, if any fails to bring a bird or rodent as relish for his *chilombola*, he is beaten; the *vilombola* sit waiting with their switches near at hand; as each novice comes, he hands over his catch and the *chilombola* throws away his switch. Inefficiency in singing or dancing is similarly punished.

2. *Injunctions to preserve the secrets of the lodge.* Throughout the rites this theme is inculcated; the novices are sworn on the *mukenge* or *mukula* stick as noted above and songs help to emphasise the punishment of leprosy (*mbumba yaluhindu* or *yaluzonga*) or epilepsy or madness. This is known as *kwangula* (adjure in sense of warning or threat). Reference has been made in some accounts to the novices being sworn on a *likishi* mask. This may be peculiar to Chokwe rites for the most part. Luchazi deny knowledge of it, some Luvale admit knowledge of it, but deny that it is regular feature of their rites.

3. *Sexual Instructions* The lowered age of the novices must deprive this of much point to-day; nevertheless, as noted above the novices have the fertility aspect of the lodge emphasized. When *vilombola* and novices are sitting naked, if a *chilombola* has an erection, the novices make sucking noises with their lips and beckon with their hands, to ensure that they may acquire the ability to do likewise. If anyone mentions *sunji* (vagina), the novices must spit.

4. *Esoteric teaching.* This consists of special words or expressions and tricks. Numerous common words are forbidden and must be replaced by other expressions. Reference has been made above to some of these.

Examples of others from Chokwe are:



Forbidden word	Ritual word	Meaning
<i>pwɔ</i>	<i>nyachikendembwa</i>	woman
<i>meya</i>	<i>maswita</i>	water
<i>mukamba</i>	<i>muboloto</i>	cassava root
<i>kahya</i>	<i>kangwota</i>	fire

This feature seems much more marked in the Chokwe rites than in those of the other tribes.

The tricks (*jipango*) may affect the novices; thus a novice may be given a long basket and told to go and fill it with mushrooms, which are in any case non-existent during the dry cold weather. Unless his relatives run to the village and bring a fowl to redeem him, the novice will be beaten on his return. A similar trick is called shooting an arrow at night; a *chilombola* shoots an arrow into the darkness and all run to find it. If it is not found, the novice will be beaten; he may be redeemed again by payment of a fowl or in some cases if forewarned, his relatives may have hidden an arrow nearby, and produce this instead. The incidence of these tricks is variable and it seems possible that they are being discontinued.

A visitor to the lodge may be tested in certain ways; he may be told *kwasa kajila* (shoot a bird); this is in fact a winged *mukula* tree seed pod, tied to the top of the lodge which he must point out. Or he may be asked to collect a mouse from the trap. When he lifts the stone of the *chiliva* (dead fall trap), nothing is there and he must root in the soil beneath where he will find two or three buried stones.

5. *Dancing*. This has already been referred to in connection with the coming out celebrations and songs which run throughout the lodge and serve both to pass the time and inculcate the teaching of the lodge and mark its phases. The songs are often little more than a repeated refrain. The following are some examples.

(a) *At sunrise*

(i) *E nyaliange nana, enda akokakoka kumbiee.*  
O brother-in-law, mother go and bring the sun.

(ii) *kumbi-e-e lelo naha musana,*  
Sun, to-day bring the sunlight,  
*E lelo vanana vovo.*

O dear to-day for our mothers yonder.

(b) *At sunset*

*Kumbi-e lyoliya mukangombe lyoliya,*  
O the sun is going to Kangombe, it is going,  
*kumbi-e lyamashika . . . lyamalemba ngoloshi,*  
the sun has left cold . . . it is setting in the evening,  
*lyakwalika nakwola . . .*

Time for putting the pot on the fire and pouring off the surplus water from it.

The reference to Kangombe is to the Ovimbundu area to the west in Angola; Kangombe kayambi was their traditional founder.

(c) *To call for food*

(i) *Ngulyeee . . . haweeeee,*  
Let me eat . . . haweeeee,  
*mavembya-a e-e-e,*  
Red-eyed doves, eee,  
*nana you,*  
O mother,  
*nvali mwalikwenda wambata kamosi kalinje-njenga,*  
Brother-in-law you are coming; and have brought a little pleasant thing (i.e. the food),  
*Mavembya-a nana you.*  
Doves, O mother,

(ii) *Reply from kalombolachika:*

*chihungu - e-e,*  
I am a Bateleur eagle,  
*njiya mwilu ee, njiya mwilu ee . . .*  
I will fly away in the sky . . .  
*vanjenje vapita, vapita musakatambo e chelee,*  
The Lozi have passed, they passed under the food platform and are moving about,  
*kasumbi kangeji, nana you, umwivwe kuyema, sokako,*  
A fowl for the stranger, mother; if you like the taste, close your door,  
*chitota mwalya mbangwee, kuli nana kwokweee.*  
The woodpecker eats muvanga fruits, from its mother over yonder.

(d) *Revilng the uncircumcised*

*Njitukilyenu wapamba ngoma, maleve ngungele.*  
Let me curse them; one who climbs to a beehive, his testicles dangle below him.  
*vilima vose kusongo mbumbulu.*



and likewise with all the uncircumcised, their foreskins dangle.

- (e) *Numerous obscene songs about women.*  
*Vampwevo kuhuka, vakeva mpoko,*  
 Women are naughty, they went to steal a knife,  
*vachate Maliya kuntsundi . . . ee . . . vampwevo kuhuka.*  
 to tatoo about Maria's vagina . . . yes, women are naughty.
- (f) *Songs sung to pass the time.*  
*kasendankuvi kachiyengo meso tooo*  
 The White-eye (*Zosterops*), all reddish with a white eye,  
*tunamuwane kumusamba meso tooo*  
 We have found him on the *Brachystegia* with his eyes all white.

It may be noted that the songs fall into at least two sharp classes; those such as (a), (b) and (c) above are of the ritual; others such as the last three are not part of the ritual but sung for pleasure and to vary the songs of the lodge; they are not of the lodge though like the first two they may be apposite in reflecting the themes of the lodge. Gluckman refers to what he calls "the great song of the lodge" when fish were caught in bee-hives and honey was found in the fish traps. This song is certainly not universal; I have never heard it at any of the ceremonies which I have visited and not succeeded in finding any one who knows it, though it is admitted that such a song would fall into category (f). The explanation that this song refers to the complementary division of work between men and women as being part of the right order of nature is to me far-fetched, but perhaps I am unappreciative of symbolism.

Another feature of the songs needs mention; the first three songs quoted above are Luvale but contain a large admixture of Luchazi; the last three are Luchazi but contain traces of Luvale. This seems to be a feature of the songs even in the pure Luvale areas.

The songs also contain language which is not

in daily use; the latter may well be a preservation of archaic features, but what the significance is of Luvale areas and rites always using songs which are mingled with Luchazi is more difficult to assess. There is no historical evidence to suggest that the Luvale borrowed the songs from the Luchazi. This is a point which needs more consideration.

In as much as the songs and esoteric features vary between the tribes, if a Luvale were to say to a Chokwe that he had been initiated at Chokwe circumcision rites, he would be tested to see whether he possessed the necessary special knowledge which his claim implied.

#### CONCLUSION

Apart from the specific functions of the rites, the latter certainly serve to bring many people together who might not otherwise meet; the final coming out is a festive occasion attended by many, even from a distance, and so the rites serve society in a way which is found in other types of ritual such as the exorcism of *mahamba* spirit possessions. The building up of tension in the early stages of the ceremonies followed by the release, when the novices have healed and again when they finally emerge at the end, presumably has a cathartic value in society, which I hardly feel competent to discuss. My notes above have been concerned with the facts observed, and I have rarely ventured into explanations of symbolism outside those which are commonly admitted by the people themselves. There is obviously a wide field for study and interpretation here, though whether enough detailed observations from enough occasions exist, seems to me rather doubtful. Unless there is an adequate body of data to use for this purpose, such interpretations seem to me to be highly speculative at times. It is to be hoped also that further observations may throw more light on some of the points against which I have raised a query. I have been careful not to state that such earlier accounts were wrong, but I have pointed out where and how they conflict with my own observations.

# THE LEMBA ANCESTOR BARAMINA

HARALD VON SICARD

## SYNOPSIS

*For a long time the Lemba have been supposed to close their prayers with the word Amen. Some Lemba prayers are quoted and shown to be an enumeration of their ancestors, the supposed Amen being the second part of the name of their great ancestor Baramina. — His cult is said to be connected with the chameleon, a being of the primitive ages, and he himself is considered to represent a Dema ancestor of the type elaborated by Prof. Jensen. Baramina and Lisa (Leza), the chameleon, seem to indicate another link between South, East, and West African mythology.*

THE Lemba are considered to be a Mohammedan sect. They live scattered among the tribes of the Northern Transvaal and Southern Rhodesia, the centre of density being in the Belingwe District, where they recognize Mposi as their chief. He is a scion of their Sadike clan.

Quite a lot has been written about them before. The new material presented in this article was obtained in 1951 from a man of the Toba clan, of which one, called Nhongo, has been for years the master of ceremonies at their *ngoma*, or Initiation School (FROBENIUS, p. 171 *seq.*; OTHENIUS, p. 65: Nonko).

The information was written down for me as a result of inquiries made about the Lemba high-god and runs as follows:

*UaRemba vakanga vari maCawa vaMahamadi. UaRemba vakazodzingwa naMahamadi, nokuti vakanga vashinja vasina kurava buku. Vakabva*

<sup>1</sup> The Lemba were once Mohammedan Chawa, they were driven away by Mohammed because they kosher killed (animals) without having read the "Book". They fled to the Hindi country [this may be the Makua coast. WORSFOLD, p. 214 *seq.*]. The first Lemba to arrive there was Baramina. He was followed by others who stayed there, Sifohani, Masafina and Hundurira.

There, Baramina was their leader. They all worshipped him, and even to-day all Lemba finish saying *waHundurira*, *waBaramina*, because he was the god

*votizira munyika youuHindi. Munyika iyoyo mu remba wakatanga kušika mo zita rake ndi Baramina, ana-vateveri vake vakagara 'mo: na-Sofohani naMasafina nawaHundurira.*

*Vari imomo Baramina ndiye waiva mukuru. Ivovo vose vakapira iye, nanhasi varembe vose vanongopedzisira vaciti waHundurira waBaramina, ndiko kuti ndiye mjari wavaipira.*

*Uacizobva muvuHindi ndo kuzovuya munyika yeSena. Imomo muSena varembe vakanga vawanda, vapira Baramina seiye mjari wavo.*

*Pasure varembe vakapararira vacibva Sena vovuya munyika dzino. PaSena ipapo ndipo pavakapiwa mitupo, kubvira mabiko avarembe ose. Mabiko iwawo vakaapiwa naBaramina. Musi wavapiwa mabiko Baramina wakashanduka, akaita sorwaivi. Asi mukuru ndiye Baramina, ndiye wavakaidza mudzimu mukuru wavo.<sup>1</sup>*

Evidently, this information opens up some new whom they worshipped.

Later, they left *vuHindi* and came to the Sena country. There, they increased greatly and worshipped Baramina as if he were their god.

Then, the Lemba scattered and came from Sena to these parts. It was in Sena that they got their totems, i.e. all the Lemba oaths. They were given to them by Bar-Amina. The day they got the oaths Baramina was changed and became like a chameleon. Yet, Baramina is the great one. They call him their great departed ancestor.



possibilities for the solution of the Lemba puzzle. In the following we shall confine ourselves to two main points: (1) The Lemba prayers, and (2) The chameleon as representing Baramina.

## 1.

It has been maintained for almost a century that the Lemba close their prayers with a word similar to, or even identical with, the Jewish, Christian and Mohammedan *Amen*.

Merensky<sup>1</sup> is to my knowledge the first to refer to a Lemba prayer which begins and closes with *Hamen* or *Amen*. According to him, they could not translate it; Krapf, however, recognized it "als aus der Makuasprache stammend". Most probably Merensky refers to a prayer which was reproduced by Wangemann in 1867 and which, according to him, has the following wording:

*Ha mena oa honzo oa le farafatela oa helezano*  
*oa farafatela* (WANGEMANN, p. 436 seq., Cp. VAN WARMELO, p. 70).

Schlömann seems to have received his information about the Lemba prayers either from Wangemann or from Merensky (SCHLÖMANN, p. 67).

Knothe wrote in 1888, when exploring the possibilities of taking up mission work in the Belingwe District, that Mposi's Lemba used to say prayers in a language which they did not understand, closing with *Ará*, *Ard* (KNOTHE, *Diary*, 22.7.1888).

According to van Warmelo's informant the man who leads the prayer finishes by saying *Amu*, whereupon all present say together *Amu*, *Amune*, *Amu* (VAN WARMELO, p. 67 seq.). Jacques, again, writes the word *Amin* (JACQUES, p. 249), and Christian missionaries have interpreted it as meaning *Amen* (for instance, JUNOD, II, p. 424).

Before entering into a discussion of Wangemann's prayer and the word *ha mena* or *amin* as such, we should like to refer to still another Lemba prayer or song which is taught in their initiation school and which is regarded by Frobenius as

"der Inbegriff des Warembatums". He has rendered it in the following way:

*Wahunsu, wua bika njali na mbara mina.*  
*Massafura wua unnolira;*

and he has even ventured to translate it (FROBENIUS, p. 172).

In the light of our new information, however, it becomes clear that these prayers cannot be translated, as the language used for them is neither "Makua" nor "that form of Tshikalanga which is the Lemba language" (VAN WARMELO, p. 67), but an enumeration of the great Lemba ancestors. As a matter of fact, it has been definitely stated that the Lemba in their prayers invoke their dead chiefs (VAN WARMELO, p. 67) or, as Junod puts it, "quote 'all their mountains', viz. all the sacred hills where the ancestors have been buried, and at the end of each sentence they all answer: 'hunjiini . . .'" (JUNOD, II, p. 424).

Wangemann's prayer should, then, read:

(*bar-*) *Amina, waHundu (rira), waLefarafatela,*  
*waHelezano, waHundu (rira), waHundu (rira),*  
*waHelezano, waFarafatela*",

*wa-* being the laudatory plural prefix before the ancestor's name, and Farafatela and Helezano are, according to my informant, also Lemba ancestors.

In the same way, Frobenius' hymn ought to be written:

*Wa-Hundu (rira), wabikanjali nabar-Amina,*  
*Masafura, waHundurira,*

all these names being recognized by my informant as belonging to Lemba ancestors.

Thus, the closing *Amen* or *Amina* of the Lemba prayers turns out to be nothing else than the second part of the name Baramina. As a matter of fact my informant told me that the Lemba don't close their prayers with *Amen* and that *Amina* has been taken by the uninitiated to mean that word.

The ancestor names have been kept strictly

<sup>1</sup> MERENSKY, p. 140. T. Price informs me that he has never come across people who call themselves Makua and that this designation is resented by all

speakers of what we group as the Makua dialects. (letter 3.7.1951).

secret not only by the Lemba, but for a very long time also by the other Rhodesian tribes, the reason being that the Africans feared and partly still fear that they could be misused by enemies to do them harm.

## 2.

Baramina is said to have become at his death like a chameleon. On the other hand, I have been told by Lemba people of the Serimani clan<sup>1</sup> that they used to catch and kill a chameleon in connection with their ancestor cult, and this statement was later confirmed by my Tova informant, who added that the Lemba do this in order to commemorate Bar-Amina.

It is, of course, only natural that so strange an animal as the chameleon plays a prominent part in the African mythology. The Karanga, for instance, believe that it would deprive people of their strength to till the field where it lives,<sup>2</sup> or that it is a bad omen when you see one casting its skin (DGANO, p. 15). They also believe that it has a healing power: when you have purulent eyes, you catch a chameleon and put it on them, and your eyes get alright again.

Most surprising is its power to change into a mouse. Where else, the Karanga ask, would all these mice in summer come from? Yet, it changes only to one species, the *banya*, the cleverest among them all (see, for *banya*, NADA 1939, p. 14 seq.) Here one might recall that the Lemba taboo the mouse.

Again, the Congo believe that a person can strengthen his *nsala* (soul) and lengthen his life by taking an animal's soul or strength, and among the animals enumerated in this connection we find the chameleon (Laman, cit. ANDERSSON, p. 63).

According to the Yao, who are identical with the Chawa ancestors of the Lemba (OTHENIUS, p. 68), it was the chameleon who found the first human couple in an eel-basket and introduced them into the world (McDonald, Werner, cit. BAUMANN, p. 181 and TEGNAEUS, p. 175).

The chameleon is further known as the messenger of Life Eternal, all the way from the Zulu, throughout East Africa and as far as to the Hausa in the Sudan (BAUMANN, p. 270 seq.; ABRAHAMSON, pp. 7 seq., 136, map 3), while the Venda regard it as the messenger of death (STAYT, p. 362), and this is an exception of considerable interest as it seems to indicate that the chameleon cannot be regarded primarily as a solar animal (BAUMANN, pp. 137, 274, 279). Moreover, Baumann points out the African's ambivalent feelings towards it (p. 274). Nor would the Lemba have chosen it as the symbol of their "great ancestor", if it were only the hated reptile of death.

It would seem more probable that, wherever the chameleon is found together with some mythical hero partner, as in the stories about the origin of death or in the Dahomey myths which we will have to consider presently, the couple may be traced back to some very ancient conception of humanity as being divided into a dual social organization or in polarities; and that the Sun and the Moon, etc., are secondarily associated with the couple, the essential knowledge to be demonstrated by the myth being that of original Dema deities who, in primitive times, brought about an order of Life which present-day humanity tries to live up to. (JENSEN, p. 158-61).

Baramina who became like a chameleon must, therefore, be regarded as, in the last instance, representing a Dema ancestor.<sup>3</sup> Our assumption is supported by the fact of the so-called "Chameleon procession" at the end of the Venda, as well as the Tonga initiation, when the newly initiated proceed to the chief's kraal "imitating the gait of the chameleon" (STAYT, p. 135; JUNOD, I, p. 93). Regarded from the African point of view, the "Chameleon procession" does not indicate that the initiates are now as wise and prudent as the chameleon, or that "they are men who think and no longer boys without intelligence", but rather that the initiates have now been incorporated in that order of life which was established by the original Dema taking from them their grain (Frobenius, cit. BAUMANN, p. 348).

<sup>3</sup> See for Dema ancestors, JENSEN, p. 118 seq., 185 seqq.

<sup>1</sup> Cp. to this clan VON SICARD, p. 140.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. to this the Nupe myth about the primeval chameleon, which stepped on the strong and dangerous white ants, thus depriving them of their strength and



ancestor, though — to be sure — the modern Venda and Tonga would know nothing of this conception. On the other hand, one has to keep in mind that both tribes were strongly influenced<sup>1</sup> in their initiation rites by Baramina's, the chameleon's, Lemba (JUNOD, I, p. 72 *seq.*; STAYT, p. 126).

There remains a last consideration with regard to the Dema ancestor of the Lemba in the shape of a chameleon. It leads us to the Ewe in West Africa, who have a myth about Lisa, "the deified chameleon", who is always closely related to Gu, the first heavenly smith (see for the sources TEGNAEUS, p. 62 *seq.*). Baumann has pointed out that many features of this myth are strongly reminiscent of the East African mythology (BAUMANN, pp. 137, 274), where the chameleon, among the Nyoro in the Lake region and among the above-mentioned Yao (the Chawa ancestors of the Lemba), appears as a being of the primitive ages and where it is often regarded as the original ancestor of humanity (BAUMANN, p. 188, cp. p. 208 : 13).

The similarity, on the other hand, between the West African Lisa and Leza, the high-god on the Upper and Middle Zambezi, is striking, though one has to remember that both are mixed up to-day with deities of other cultural strata. Leza, for instance, has been transformed to such an extent by East African conceptions that his main features have become those of an atmospheric creator and rain-god, embedded, however, in manistic-chthonic myths (BAUMANN, p. 39); whereas Lisa can scarcely be separated from the divine Mawu and the heavenly smith Gu. Nevertheless, there can still be discerned so many features which they have in common that their original identity becomes extremely probable, and, finally, both are reflected in the Lemba ancestor Baramina, the chameleon.

Thus, Leza as well as Lisa are regarded as heavenly smiths (Torrend, cit. BAUMANN, p. 36;

Herskovits, cit. TEGNAEUS, p. 64), while in South East Africa the Lemba have been the smiths *par excellence* and are believed to have introduced the art of forging. Both Leza and Lisa are "ancestor gods" and as such the founders of clans: Leza was "planting the tribes and communities in their respective places" (Doke), and Lisa and Gu are regarded as "des fondateurs de clans" (TEGNAEUS, p. 64), while Baramina gave the Lemba clans their different totems or oaths. Both Leza and Lisa occur as creators in a characteristic co-operation with Earth, Leza's partner being Bulongo, i.e. Clay, and Lisa's Mawu or Mahu (Smith-Dale, Le Hérissé, cit. BAUMANN, pp. 34, 137), the latter name being a word which strangely coincides with the Karanga *vu* (pl. *ma-vu*), Tonga *mabvu* and Congo *maavu*, *mamvu*: soil, earth, clay.<sup>2</sup> Leza's sign is the meteor, and Lisa the smith, Mawu's envoy to earth, forges the shooting stars (SPEITH, BAUMANN, pp. 35, 136; TEGNAEUS, p. 62). After having completed his work on earth, Leza returns to heaven (Doke, BAUMANN, p. 38), and so does Lisa after having re-established the world (Herskovits, TEGNAEUS, p. 64). Lisa is a Dema ancestor in the form of a culture hero (TEGNAEUS, JENSEN), and the same is said of Nobesa (PACHECO, p. 282 *seq.*), who must be regarded as a local form of Leza.<sup>3</sup> Again, Baramina has also features of a culture hero.<sup>4</sup>

It would appear that the Lemba conception of the chameleon-like Dema ancestor emanated somewhere in or near Abyssinia and that it spread from there to the West as well as to the South East. There is some reason to believe that the ancestors of at least some of the Lemba clans came from Abyssinia. Uunyoro, the Yao country, Sena, Rhodesia and the Transvaal indicate the route of their wanderings, and the connection of these mythical smiths with Baramina who became like a chameleon would indicate another link between West and South East African mythology.

<sup>1</sup> The Lemba influence does, however, not imply that the Bantu-speaking tribes who were first to arrive in South East Africa did not practise circumcision before the arrival of the Lemba.

<sup>2</sup> So far, the name Mawu has not found a satisfactory explanation, BAUMANN, p. 135.

<sup>3</sup> See for other forms of Leza's name Baumann p. 34.

<sup>4</sup> Note for the relation Leza-Lisa-Baramina the

historical connection between the Lemba and Rozi. Leza is used for God among the Rozi, (FROBENIUS, *Erythräa*, p. 68), while the name of the Lemba highgod is Madeza (KLEIN, p. 193), which is evidently another form for Leza. On the other hand, the main section of the Rozi, the Moyo clan would seem to have come to Rhodesia from the Congo region (SICARD: "Dgoma lungundu", p. 119).

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## KIKUYU TALES

C. CAGNOLO

## PART IV

22. LIES AND JEALOUSY BEGET  
MISFORTUNE

A long time ago there was a widow named Mwetweri. The reason why she was called so was because she was a great liar and always seeking her own interest. She had only one son, whose name was Kemango. When her husband died, she inherited a great deal of live stock: sheep, goats and cattle. She had a very bad character and was never on good terms with the other women of the neighbourhood. She was a rich woman but very miserly and stingy.

In order to preserve her capital of live stock intact, she prevented her only son from getting married, although he was of suitable age and willing to marry. She used to tell him to wait until her death and then he would be master of the whole inheritance. She could not suffer another woman in her house, whom she considered as another consumer of her food, especially milk and meat.

Kemango was very grieved at that. He waited for many years, but when all the youngsters of his age group got married, he thought his social position was now unbearable, being the only man without a wife, while he had plenty of cattle to buy one. Something must be done, he said, or I shall go abroad never to return. In the village near to his own there lived a pretty girl whom he met many times on the road. He loved her secretly but never made any open proposal to her for fear of his mother. But now it was high time to act and he decided to woo her. The girl responded very promptly and accepted to become his wife for better or for worse.

When he disclosed to his mother what he was going to do and asked leave to take some animals to pay the girl's dowry, the woman became furious and tried to reject the proposal of her son. Nothing however could change the decision of Kemango.

He went straight to the kraal, took out the number of animals he needed and went with them to the girl's father. He then built a large and well shaped hut on his father's land and after a couple of weeks he got married.

The wicked woman went to the marriage feast, but she was cool and still full of resentment. She greeted the bride, but in a cold way, almost sneering at her. The young couple did not worry very much at her disgraceful behaviour and made the best of the circumstances.

The months passed very quickly for the young couple but still their life was not of the happiest. Not a single day passed without the grumblings and shoutings of the old woman who delighted in poking unbecoming hints and gross insults at the young wife. The young lady didn't speak, but in her heart she was ashamed of such a step-mother and felt really bored with her presence. She told her husband her pain. He tried to console her assuring her that nothing in this world is everlasting and that that trial too would end some day.

The silence of the young lady did not appease the old one, nay, it became a new incentive to the perverted sense of the wicked woman, who decided to get rid of the girl, cost what it might.

One day she cooked some arum; cut a bunch of first grade bananas and filled a small gourd (*getete*) of millet gruel. She put all these delicacies into a fibre basket, threw it on her back and went to see a witchdoctor. She wanted to consult him and to know how she could get rid of the young lady without raising any suspicion about her foul conspiracy. The witchdoctor received the presents with an encouraging smile and gently invited the woman to sit down on a clean tripod near the fire place.

— Well, Mwetweri, he said, what is your trouble, what can I do for you?

— I have a terrible spirit<sup>1</sup> (*ngoma*) in my house, nay, a legion of evil spirits in my heart and I want to be freed from them all, she said.

— Yes, but there must be a leader of all those spirits. Do you know him Mwetwari?

— You are an intelligent man, Kahiga. You know already the source of all my troubles. Listen now. There is a young woman in my village, the wife of my son, whose presence is for me just like a thorn in my eyes. I must get rid of her and live in peace. Show me how to do that safely; that's all I want from you to-day. I am a rich woman, you know, and if your advice leads to success, I will reward you generously.

— I think I have understood your case very well and I am prepared to show you what to do, said the witchdoctor. He searched for a while in a bag and finally produced a dirty piece of bamboo carefully sealed with raw wax, and holding it in his hand said: "This works wonders and I am sure it will satisfy you too in your specific case." He broke the seal on the top of the tube and poured a white powder<sup>2</sup> on a dry leaf of bananas, folded the leaf very carefully and presenting it to the woman said: "Listen, Mwetwari, you take this powder with you. Go home and cook a good calabash of gruel. Make it tasty and appealing. Pour this powder into it and stir thoroughly. Just before dark make a present of it to the person you hate and retire to your home. She will drink the gruel and to-morrow all your troubles will be over for ever." The woman thanked and promised to be back the following day to report on the result.

She prepared the gruel and followed the instructions of the witchdoctor exactly, but alas, nothing happened of any importance. How could it be explained? The explanation is this. Mwetwari had hardly left the hut of the witchdoctor when the young lady accompanied by her father arrived at the same place too, to consult the same witchdoctor.

<sup>1</sup> Ill-luck, disease, family misunderstandings and all the ills common to human nature are more promptly attributed by the Akikuyu to the displeased ancestors' spirits, than to natural causes and lack of precaution. In such cases the spirits are supposed to be dissatisfied with all or some member of the family and must be appeased with the sacrifice of a sheep.

<sup>2</sup> The witchdoctors prepare a great variety of concoctions,

Kahiga, said the father, my daughter is terribly vexed by her step-mother; couldn't you suggest what to do to put things right?

— Of course I can do that, said the witchdoctor. Listen to me. To-morrow, Mwetwari will cook some gruel and present it to your daughter. Be careful, young lady, not to drink it if you care for your life, it is highly poisonous. There is something else you will do too. You will accept the gruel from the old lady and put it aside in your hut. The following day you will warm it and pour it into a new receptacle. You will take it to Mwetwari telling her that you were much touched by the present and want to express your gratitude in return with a calabash of a freshly cooked gruel. Mwetwari will drink it. Next day you will be completely free from any further vexation. You will enjoy your life with your husband for ever after.

The father and the daughter went home quite satisfied. The young lady did exactly as she was told by the witchdoctor. The prediction came perfectly true. The following day the old lady was dead.

On hearing the sad news Kemango grieved very deeply. In that moment he had forgotten all the wrongs he had suffered through her and only remembered that the old woman was his mother. He never knew what caused her death, but his wife and her father knew it too well.

## 23. THE MAN-EATER (*Irimo*)

Once upon a time a great dance<sup>3</sup> took place at a place called "Mogumoin". The dance was very well attended and the success really marvellous. At the end of it, when people used to disperse and go home, a small group of young girls met a handsome youngster very attractive and very pleasant in conversation. They were soon around

tions, ointments and powders. The majority of them are perfectly innocuous, but some of them are really poisonous. They are used in black magic and mixed in food and drinks with murderous intent.

<sup>3</sup> Dances used to be the greatest pastime for the Akikuyu youth. They used to dance in the open, preferably under some big trees. It was a public entertainment and was always attended by very big crowds



him talking, laughing and joking with him. They accompanied him for some distance and became so infatuated that they said: "He is so sweet, let us accompany him to his village and see what his residence is like." So they went on laughing and talking and having a jolly time with him.

After some time a girl had a glance at the nape of the youngster and discovered a mouth slightly concealed by the long hair, which was just swallowing a fly. She was very shocked and knew immediately that the youngster was an "Irimo", a monster so dangerous and frightful in the Kikuyu tribe. She kept silent for a while and when she had completely recovered from the shock, she said: "My dear girls, I was told by my mother to fetch water before dark, so excuse me, I must return home." And off she went without saying anything about the discovery.

Later on another girl made the same discovery and she also took an excuse for leaving the group and escaping the danger. So did all the other girls except two sisters who didn't see anything and decided to accompany the youngster right to his home.

When they came in sight of his abode, the young man said: "Look at the other side of the valley, that is my home. Let me accelerate my pace and hurry home, because I have to tend to those white sheep you see there in the courtyard before it gets dark. You come with an easy pace and we will meet at home." — "That's right *mwana-ke*, we are only too pleased to go slowly", said the girls, "because we are tired."

The youngster went on very fast, now and then running, hopping and disappearing through the high bush which nearly concealed the path. He deceived the girls. He pretended to tend the white sheep, but those shining things in the courtyard were not sheep at all, they were human bones scattered all over the place and he was very anxious to remove them before the arrival

of the girls, to prevent them from a shock and avoid any dreadful suspicion. When the girls arrived, the courtyard and the surroundings of the hut were perfectly clean and the homestead was quite respectable. He invited the girls to enter the hut and have a rest. He left them inside with the promise of good food later on. Leaving the hut, he closed the door. He didn't go very far but sat down in the small veranda (*gethaku*) in front of the hut. He was waiting for his father and some relatives, so that they could enjoy a very good meal on the easy prey. After some time the girls began to shudder and to feel terribly frightened in the hut. They lit a little fire and to their horror they discovered several things still more terrifying, such as relics of human bones, stains of blood and several knives scattered here and there on the floor and . . . and a human skull in a corner of the hut. They realized they were caught in a trap, they knew too well now that that was the abode of the *Marimo* (the men-eaters) and consequently they were destined to be devoured by them. "*Ehya maito eh!* said the young girl, what shall we do to escape the slaughtering?" They kept silent for a little while and then decided to dig a tunnel under the wall of the hut and escape through it. They began to dig vigorously. The ground was not hard and in a very short time the hole was deep and encouraging. But the *Irimo* who was sitting in the veranda on hearing the noise was puzzled and asked: "What are you doing in the hut?" — "Nothing special," the girls answered, "we are just splitting some firewood to make more fire." The *Irimo* believed and kept quiet for another while. The girls continued their digging. But after some time the noise from inside increased. The *Irimo* could not resist his curiosity any longer and decided to see with his own eyes what was going on in the hut.

Lo! he nearly staggered back with surprise. In a corner of the hut there was a big mound of earth; the younger girl had already disappeared

of every description. They had dances for every age group, i.e. for young boys, for youngsters, for middle age men and also for old folks. Girls and women had songs and dances among themselves and sometimes with the men. Dances were also used by the elders and rulers of the country as good opportunities for

publishing the rules and the regulations for the good government of the country. Nowadays such large joyous gatherings have completely disappeared. Instead the young generation try to substitute for them some imitations of European dances; the result is a hybrid, devoid of attraction, but a source of moral corruption.

through the tunnel and the bigger one was just getting through, but she was too big; she could not go further and remained squeezed halfway with her body in the tunnel and her legs still in the hut. The Irimo hastened to retrieve the prey. He seized a sharp knife and quickly cut a leg off the girl, so that she could not go any further. The poor wretch shrieked and entreatingly said: "Ohi, *mwanake*, why do you kill me? For your mother's sake, spare my life, I'll consent to become your wife." The Irimo was touched by those words and spared the poor girl. He cured the wound in the best way he could do, and after some time he married her.

Nearly two seasons passed away and the girl gave birth to a child. It was a boy and was called Manga. The baby bore the characteristics of the *Marimo*, i.e. a mouth in front and a second mouth in the nape. The child grew very fast and sturdy. At seven Manga began to follow his father in the bush and in every place he went hunting for human meat. Father and son used to live on human meat, but mother could never taste it, not even bear the sight of it, and so she was given mutton which she ate with boiled grain and vegetables. She was living a poor and lonely life.

One day her sister thought to pay her a surprise visit. She knew of her marriage but wished to make sure if she was still alive or devoured by the *Marimo*. She approached the hut with great precaution hiding herself in the high bush and spying now and then to ascertain that the *Marimo* were not there. She saw her sister seated near the hut, and being well sure that nobody else was there, she approached her and exchanged very warm greetings with her. They had a long talk. They had so many adventures to narrate, so many thrills and also so many pains and sorrows!

When the sun began to decline, the elder sister advised the younger one to leave and hurry away through the bush, because the *Marimo* could arrive at any moment with their meat for the evening meal. "But listen, my dear sister," she said, "on your way back avoid to stop under the big

*Mogumo*, the well-known tree at Kagwathe, because that is the resting place of the *Marimo*. You would be devoured by them."

The younger sister accepted the advice with gratitude and after a little more talking, they separated in the hope of meeting again some time. The younger sister went on a long way and when she arrived at the dangerous tree, a terrible storm broke out. She climbed the tree thinking of putting herself in safety from the *Marimo* and the rain. A few minutes after, the *Marimo*, father and son, came under the tree for shelter too, waiting for the storm to end. By chance Manga had a look at the top of the tree. His sight was caught by something dark and bulky, resting on the last big branch of the tree. "Father," asked Manga, "what is that there on the upper branch?" The father had a look and said: "Nothing of interest it is a nest of red ants (*gethambu*)!" — "I don't think so, father," said Manga, "let me go up and see what it is." He climbed the tree very quickly and in no time he was at the feet of the young lady. He snatched at her toes and detached two of them at a bite. He called the father who too climbed the tree. The poor lady was shrieking and imploring the monsters to spare her, but father and son seized her by the feet and threw her down on the ground. She died instantly. She was pregnant and very near to become a mother. They cut her body in several pieces and extracted two babies from her womb. The twins were still alive and Manga thought to take them home and have them cooked by his mother. The mother was rather surprised at the finding and after several questions she had put to Manga not only guessed, but knew without doubt that the mother of those twins was her poor sister. She consented to cook them, but an idea flashed through her mind.

Father and son had to go for some business and should not be back until dark. In the meantime the mother killed two big rats and cooked them for Manga. Then she concealed the twins in a big earthen pitcher<sup>1</sup> covering it with a

<sup>1</sup> The Kikuyu pottery craft produces the spherical bottomed cooking pots of different sizes. This kind of work is usually reserved to the women, especially in those places where suitable clay is plentiful. The product

is not fine; the method and means are primitive, yet they do not lack ingenuity, but what matters most the result of their handicraft is a useful article for the preparation of food.



flat stone. When the Marimo returned home, the mother presented the two rats to Manga saying: "Here is your meat." Manga looked at it and said: "Mother, how is it that the twins are so small now?" — "Don't you know that meat shrinks when roasted?" the mother said. Manga accepted the explanation and did not add a word more.

The twins were kept in hiding for a long time. They had their food and necessary attention during the absence of Manga and his father. When they were well grown, they used to go outside to play and have fresh air. They went on in that way for many years until they reached the age of circumcision. They were circumcised secretly by a special man and hidden again for another period of time.

At last they became full grown; and beautiful boys they were! The mother bought two spears and two bows with arrows for them. From time to time they came out from their hiding place and had a good practice in the use of their weapons.

One day Manga noticed many foot prints in the courtyard and asked his mother: "Whose traces are these?" — "Don't you know my foot prints? These traces are mine. I have to go to and fro so many times in the day carrying food from the granary to the house . . ." Manga didn't speak any word, but evidently he was not quite convinced.

Meantime the mother was knitting a very large fibre bag<sup>1</sup> as those generally used for harvesting the millet. The size was more than normal, but the Marimo did not bother about it; they were not concerned at all in that kind of female occupation. When she had nearly finished it, one day she told her husband: "I would like to know if this bag is large enough to keep you and your Manga in, so that I could carry you and your son in case you get sick when we shall leave this place for another country." The Marimo didn't suspect anything and laughing entered the bag. "It is not high enough," she said, "I must add a little bit more so that the bag can be fastened properly with my leather strap (*mokwa*)."

She worked another week and brought it to the desired size. Now the time had arrived for action. She instructed the twins to be ready with their weapons and at a given sign, to be on the Marimo and kill them. She asked again the Marimo to enter the bag and when they were in, hastily closed it on their heads, fastening the aperture with a strong string. She coughed twice and the twins came out brandishing their spears. They poked the bag several times and pierced the captives savagely and repeatedly until both were dead.

— Manga, Manga, you told me! said the father before dying.

— Yes, father, I told you, answered Manga.

After the slaughtering of the two monsters the lame lady and the two twins returned to their country of origin and had a happy life among their relations.

## 24. FORBEARANCE REWARDED

Once upon a time there was an old man who had two daughters. One day a respectable young man met the elder one and asked if she would marry him. "There is too much work at home," she said, "and besides that I am still a child." That was tantamount to a refusal.

In those days a dreadful famine swept over the country and there was great distress in every home. When the parents and relatives heard of her refusal, they scolded her severely, because the youth was a wealthy man and could have helped a great deal in those difficult times. They began to treat her harshly, even depriving her of the little food they had at the daily meal. The girl resented this treatment very deeply and was much grieved at the unreasonable reproaches and ill-treatment of the parents.

One day she gathered her few belongings, fastened them in a small bundle and said to her father: "Father, I am now a full grown girl. I don't think I deserve so much ill-treatment from

texture which satisfactorily take the place of our baskets and bags.

<sup>1</sup> Proper weaving has never been known to the Aki-kuyu. They are, nevertheless, able to produce bags and purses with knotted strings of an even and strong

you and your associates. I am going to leave the house this very day. I'll go a very long way until I faint and die. Farewell". In so saying she made off, because she really meant what she said.

She went on and on for many days until she arrived at a place where there was plenty of food of every kind just lying idle in attractive stacks and bunches on the soft grass. She was amazed at such an abundance of food displayed before her eyes. She looked round to see the owner of such a blessing, but nobody was to be found in the vicinity. She called loudly: "Who is the owner of this food?" Nobody answered. She was perplexed about what to do. After a little while the food started to speak and said: "Beautiful girl, we are here at your disposal. Please cook us, dress, mash us and help yourself, we are only too pleased to be at your service." The girl wondered still more at the voice, but did not become afraid. She prepared the different kinds of food very nicely as she only knew how to do, and when all was ready, she posed for a while in front of them and smiling said: "Goodbye you delicious food, I do not eat you. Thank you for your kindness, I must go further on." She left them untouched and went on.

After another day of travelling she found in the shade of a beautiful tree a big piece of meat resting on a banana leaf. It was mutton, very attractive and fat. She stopped and looked at it. Then the meat began to speak and said: "Gracious girl, I am here for you. Cook me and help yourself." The girl cooked the meat but declined to eat it and left it untouched. She went on again, meeting now and then more surprises of the above kind. She was always kind to those things but never tasted them, not a single bit.

After several days of travelling, she reached a marvellous place where everything was shining and radiating beautiful colours of every kind and shade. The people too were very kind and obliging, so that she couldn't realize whether it were a

dream or a reality. She was soon invited to enter a marvellous hut to be served with all kinds of food. She was the object of great attention and respect. She remained there for five days. She never had such a treat in all her life. Those were really blissful days. On the sixth day she prepared for her return journey home. She was anxious to tell and describe to her kinsfolk all the marvels she encountered in her travels and the magic place of her stay during her absence from home. The master of the house presented her with several baskets of every kind of food and took her to a secret place in the hut where stood a big earthen pitcher half sunk in the ground. He told her: "Put your right arm in this pitcher." She did so, and lo! when she removed her arm from it, hand and arm were loaded with shining ornaments: rings, coloured beads and trinkets of lovely shapes and precious material. She was told to put in the other hand and the same ornaments graced it. She could not believe her eyes and touched them several times, while a sweet smile betrayed all the joy she felt in her heart. But that was not the end. The master of the house now told her to put into the pitcher her right leg and she did so. When she retracted it, the ankle was graciously adorned with shining brass rings (*ichango*) and several turns of fine copper chain. At the upper part of the leg just under the knee, there were other brass ornaments consisting of a long thread of yellow metal, twisted in a perfect spiral round the leg. She was invited to do the same with the other leg and the same marvel happened to it. The poor girl was so overwhelmed with joy that she couldn't speak a single word to express her gratitude to her benefactor. She was also given scented ointment, so that she became really charming, shining and glamorous like a fairy of the woods of Mt. Kenya.

Before leaving the magic house, she was given a small calabash of sugar cane beer<sup>1</sup> (*njohi*) with the following instructions: "When you arrive home, you must not show yourself to your people,

<sup>1</sup> Sugar cane has been grown from time immemorial by the Akikuyu with the almost exclusive purpose of brewing beer. The cane is peeled and crushed in a long trough with pestles by the women. The mush is soaked in water in special containers. Then it is squeezed by

hand in a string net. The liquid is filtered into big gourds. These are lined near a good fire for about 24 hours. After that lapse of time, if nothing has gone wrong, the beer is mature and ready for consumption. Natives prefer to drink it warm.



but go straight to the trellis<sup>1</sup> over the fire place of your mother's hut. When they come to light the fire in the hut, you pour down a trickle of this beer on the fire. And if anybody tells you to come out from your hiding place, you will say thus: If you want me to come out, you must first slaughter the father's white he-goat and sprinkle its skin with fat, so that I may die on it." The girl tried to impress well in her mind such instruction and took leave of the magic house.

When she arrived home, it was not yet very late in the day. She went straight to the trellis between the roof and the fire place and stayed quietly there until dark. At sunset the younger sister came in to light the fire. She put on some light firewood covering the embers with it and blew repeatedly until a brilliant flame sprang up within the three stones. Immediately a trickle of beer began to flow from the trellis and in a few moments the fire was out. The girl blew again onto the embers and revived the flame. Again more liquid flowed from the above and the fire was put out again. The girl was startled and looking at the trellis was terribly frightened. She saw something very bulky in the darkness she couldn't distinguish. "Mother, she cried, come in quickly, there is an animal on the trellis. It has put out the fire twice with its urine and I cannot light it again."

— You stupid girl, how can an animal climb there, said the mother.

— Come, mother, and see for yourself.

The mother set herself to light the fire, but as soon as the flame was up, the mysterious trickle of beer began to flow down and put out the fire. She wouldn't give in and started again to blow the embers and again the liquid dropped down. She lost her temper and looking fiercely at the trellis said in a loud tone mixed with anger: "You dirty creature, no matter if you are a human being or a beast, I bid you to come down and leave this my hut." A voice came from above and said: "I consent to come down only if the father's white he-goat is immediately slaughtered and its skin sprinkled with fat, so that I may die

on it." All the members of the house were struck with terror, but could not refuse to comply with the girl's request. They slaughtered the goat and sprinkled the skin with melted fat. Then they said to the girl: "We have satisfied your demand, now you must come down." The girl came down with all her ornaments on. She was shining like the sun . . . All eyes were upon her and nobody dared to speak, so great were their astonishment and admiration for the beautiful girl and her ornaments. At last the younger sister approached her and fondling her arms and ringlets said: "Wanjiro, couldn't you give me one of these?"

— If I give you one, what will remain there in its place?

— Where did you get all these beautiful things from? Tell me, please, I will go too and have them for myself. I can't live any longer without them.

— It is a long journey, dear sister. You must go the main path for five consecutive days; at the end of it you will find a marvellous village. There you will find everything to satisfy your wishes.

The young sister took leave of her mother and started her journey to the village of plenty. On her way she met the same things as her sister, i.e. food in abundance here, meat there and other pleasant things now and then. She had the same invitation, to which she answered effectively to her great satisfaction, eating and drinking as much as she could. She never had so much food and so tasty things in all her life. At the end of the fifth day, she arrived at the magic village. It was marvellous. She was cordially greeted by the inhabitants and invited to enter the main house. She was well tended and served with all kinds of food. For five days she was regarded as the queen of the village. At the sixth day she manifested her intention to return home. Arrangements were made for her return journey and a good variety of food was set aside for her.

Before leaving the enchanted village, the master of the house took her to a special corner of the hut and showed her a large earthen pitcher. The

to the thatched roof. Freshly gathered firewood is often spread on this trellis to dry.

<sup>1</sup> A trellis made of twigs and small poles tied together with bark strips is always suspended a short distance above the fire place to prevent the sparks setting fire

girl was told to put in her arms. She did so and to her horror when she withdrew them, they were covered with all sorts of ulcers (*mochare*) all over. She was told to do the same with her legs and the same horrible change happened to them. She was very frightened and feeling sore all over her body. Then she was given a calabash of water and instructed to do the same as the other girl did, i.e. she had to conceal herself on the trellis and pour down the water on the fire. The only difference was in the formula concerning the skin of the slaughtered goat. Instead of saying to sprinkle fat on it, she had to say to spray wood ash.

She went home very painfully. She followed literally the instructions given to her and when she came down from the trellis and was put on the goat skin, all were struck with terror at the appalling condition of her body. They were much puzzled for such a change. They had a long consultation among the relatives and the conclusion was, that surely she must have displeased the *ngoma* (ancestral spirits) by her greediness and self-indulgence. Henceforth they despised her and praised very much the older sister.

## 25. THE REASON WHY THE LEOPARD CHASES THE DOG

A long time ago the leopard and the dog<sup>1</sup> used to be very good friends. They associated intimately; they shared their food and even their sleeping place.

One day the leopard wanted to marry. It went to a far district and after some time returned home telling the dog the happy results of its love adventure, congratulating itself on its success. A few days after they planned to go both to the girl's house and meet her father for the necessary arrangements concerning the dowry and the other ceremonies according to the local custom.

In those days termites were considered as a delicacy and highly appreciated by every one

<sup>1</sup> On the arrival of the Europeans in the country, dogs were almost non-existent among the Akikuyu. Dogs were probably introduced by the Akamba when intertribal communications became safer under the

wishing to make a present. The leopard collected a full bag of them intending to take them to the girl's father together with some beer, and meanwhile discuss the number of animals requested for the dowry. He discussed his idea with the dog and both planned the particulars of the journey.

They left their abode one morning when still dark because the place they were bound for was very far and they had to spend the whole day on the road. They went on and on until noon, then they had a little rest and some food. They had also a short nap, but in a very short time they were again on the road because they intended to arrive before sunset. While trudging under their load in the scorching sun, the leopard sang a song to keep them in high spirits and forget the weariness of the journey. The song was something like this: "*Bonyoro kenda, bonyoro kenda ngoro ya ngui.*" That is to say: The creation of the dog was a failure, because when going, it swings its buttocks like a goose. The dog resented in its heart the malicious hint, but refrained from showing its resentment and pretended to be distracted. It thought of inventing a song too which would not be less caustic to the leopard.

Meantime they went on another length of the road until they reached a thicket bordering the road. The dog said: "My dear leopard, wait just a little bit here, I think I must enter this thicket for some urgent business. I shan't be long, I'll be back soon." The leopard suspecting nothing at all consented and lay down at the side of the road saying: "Be quick, please, because it's getting late." The dog entered the thicket with the bag on its back. The leopard asked: "Why do you enter the thicket with your load on? You had better leave the load here and be more free." — "Never mind, dear, I don't want to incommode you, in a few moments I will be back." The leopard accepted the excuse and did not bother any further.

The dog went deep into the thicket at the back of a big bush, where nobody could see it from the road. It unfastened the bag of termites, took out European rule. Consequently the origin of this tale must not be sought in very distant times, but only after the occupation of the country by the Europeans.



a portion of them and put it aside on the ground. Then began to eat all that remained in the bag until it had finished it all. Soon after that it began to vomit and vomit to the last ant it had swallowed. All that mess was collected carefully and put back again into the bag. It placed the untouched ants on top in order to avoid any suspicion. It fastened and shaped the load beautifully and hurried to the road. The leopard had already grown very impatient and asked with some resentment: "What did you do all the time in the thicket?" — "I was refitting the load. See how well shaped it is now, it will be easier to carry." The leopard did not object any more. They resumed their journey in silence and no quarrel followed. After some time the leopard began again to sing its favourite song: "*Bonyoro kenda . . .*" etc. It thought that the dog did not understand the hint and so took pleasure in repeating it. But far from it! The dog understood very well and was just playing a trick worthy of the challenger. In answer to the leopard the dog sang: "*Gotwara irio thee othoni wa morata.*" That's to say: I am carrying vomits to the father-in-law of my friend. The leopard felt very flattered with that song: first because it was sure now that the dog did not understand the satiric song, and secondly because the dog was praising its generosity towards the new relatives.

At last, after several hours more journey they arrived at the home of the girl. They were greeted cordially by all the members of the house and by a group of young people, boys and girls, who were anxious to know the future bride-groom. They shook off the dust of the long journey and gently put down the bag of termites. The leopard sat down, but the dog took an excuse to absent itself and disappeared into the bush. They had a long talk about the journey and about the news of the country, the season and the last dances. In the meantime the women had prepared a good dinner and put it in front of the visitors. They looked for the dog, it was not there. They called it with repeated whistlings, but no answer came. They started to eat in the certainty that it would come later on.

After having had some food and several horns

of beer, the elders said: "Let us see what our son-in-law has brought us." A big boy came forth to unfasten the bag and all were very pleased in seeing the white termites which were on the top of the bag. They asked for two shallow baskets to pour on the precious food and enjoy it. But after a few handfuls of genuine termites, a lurid substance began to flow from the bag, something very viscous and stinky. The onlookers were horrified. They left their seats shouting and cursing. They thought they had been given poison instead of food. Imagine the surprise of the leopard and how shameful it was at the terrible deception. It was extremely dejected and full of rage against the dog. Yes, it realized now that the dog and only the dog was responsible for that disaster. It swore in its heart to kill it very soon. He left the house with a broken heart and entered the bush in search of the dog. It spent a full day in searching, but to no avail, the dog had already put itself in safety long before. Tired and defeated, the leopard returned to its home to report to the relations its failure and the shame it had to bear over the trick of the dirty dog. "Henceforth," it said, "the dog will be our declared enemy. We will chase it, maim it, destroy it to the last individual of its descendants."

After that it went to consult the witchdoctor. It wanted to know the shortest way to its capture. The response of the witchdoctor was this: "Mind you, the dog is a very cunning fellow. You must use all your wit if you want to catch it. My advice is this: You arrange a public dance in a certain place and on a fixed day. You will invite all the animals of the jungle and the birds of the forest to partake of it. The only condition that you shall put is that each animal shall sing at least one song and perform a short dance. I am sure, there you will see your dog." The leopard thanked the witchdoctor and returned home to report to its relatives the response of the witchdoctor. A date was fixed and the place was the well-known open space called "*Kyahiti*".

When the day arrived, all kinds of animals flocked to the dancing place. The dog could not resist the temptation and decided to see, at least from a concealed place, the great feast. It had

recourse to the sheep of the fat tail for protection. It asked the sheep to hide it under the fat tail and when requested to dance, it should be careful not to dance too wildly, so to avoid its dropping down on the floor. Such was the agreement. When the sheep was called to dance in the middle of the circle, it entered the place carefully and instead of dancing by leaps and bounds, it just went on swinging graciously up and down but never lifting its feet from the ground. The committee of the feast was not satisfied at such display and ordered the sheep to sing with more vigour and jump high like the other animals did. The sheep could not refuse and had to jump in the air singing loudly as requested. It was very painful to betray its friend the dog, but couldn't help it. The poor dog tried to grapple as best it could, but after three jumps it relaxed and fell down on

the ground. A loud laugh came from the onlookers for the new kind of fun and all applauded the sheep for such a novelty.

As soon the leopard saw it, it sprang very swiftly on the spot and started chasing the dog while the spectators were laughing and laughing at the play. Unfortunately the leopard got entangled in the high grass and was stuck to the ground for a while. The dog fled away desperately into the high bush, through the fields, through the mountains until it could hide in safety.

The poor leopard got tired and decided to return home. It missed the dog that day but it didn't give up its decision for revenge. And even to-day no dog would venture to approach a leopard, because they know that there exists an enmity between the two species which is a legacy of their forefathers.

(to be concluded)

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# UMNU. J. D. RHEINALLT JONES

ngu-D. L. P. YALI-MANISI

*translated from the Xhosa by*

F. S. M. M. NCUBE

"Silila nabalilayo,  
simnik'imbek'umntu wayo."

*"We mourn with those who mourn,  
And honour where 'tis due."*

*Ukusweleka kwale ndoda igama lingasentla, kube  
linxeba elibuhlungu kumzi kaNtu. Imigudu aye-  
nzileyo, ezama okokuba kubekho ukusebenzisana  
phakathi kwaBaMhlophe nabaNtsundu kweli lizwe  
ayisayi kuze ilibaleke ezingqondweni zabayaziyo.*

The death of the man whose name appears  
above, was a great blow to the African people.  
His endeavours towards harmonious relationship,  
between the White and the Black of this country,  
will never be forgotten.

*Xa kulapho ke, maBandla kaNtu;  
Uhambil'uf. D. kaJonisi,  
UMagudul'imithetho yomzi kaNtu,  
Ejuty'izilembe namasolotya.  
UMabijel'izixwe nje ngechanti,  
Ehombis'iAfrika ngemiqhele.  
Ngoko zidwesa sithi khuzani —  
Khuzani kum'umnt'omkhulu.*

When time was come, O Bantu clans,  
Left J. D. the son of Jones,  
The man who smoothed the Bantu laws,  
Refining trifles, struggling forward.  
For nations he toiled like water spirit,  
Decorating Africa with honour.  
So dignitaries, in sympathy, mourn we with you,  
Because a great one has departed.

*Mbuzeni kuChalata nokaJolobe,  
Amathol'eenkunzi zakwaPhalo;  
Bayawaz'umdaka kaJonisi,  
Umdaka olizwi limntyangampo,  
Lidiliz'iintaba zoNdi nezoKhahlamba,  
Livuselel'oondilele nabathandabuzi,  
Liphaphamis'izipam-pam nezipayi-payi,  
Li thundex'iint'ezadangala kwamhla sadalwa.*

Of him from Chalata and Jolobe inquire,  
Descended from bulls of Phalo's country,  
Who know the dark ones of Jones' heart,  
With a shrill but plaintive cry.  
Which topples down the lofty Drakensberg,  
Awakening doubters and heavy with sleep,  
The foolish, the light of thought alike,  
Driving gently the inert since creation.

*Wolul'iindaw'exigoso namagqagala,  
Wafundis'izithulu nexidenge,  
Watotobis'iimfama nezighwala,  
Wahlahl'iintsunguzi zobumnyam'eAfrika,  
Esalathis'indlela koonyana bakaNtu;  
Ukuze kuvel'amadodan'afundile;  
Ukuze kube kh'amaqhajan'aqavile;  
Akhokel'izixwe ngengqondo nengqiqo.*

He straightened laws and crooked points,  
Teaching fools, the deaf mutes too,  
Giving hand to blind and lame,  
Cutting the forest of Africa's darkness,  
Pointing the way to the sons of Ntu,  
That young men educated may emerge,  
Fearless, able and eloquent persons, [tation.  
Leading the nation with understanding and medi-

*Kuwe ke mdaka kaJonisi,  
Ndi bek'ilitye lesikhumbuziso,  
Thole lenkunzi yaseWelisi.  
Wena wafiyi iBilitan'ingaxakekanga,  
Weza kuthi, aph'eAfrika;  
Ukuz'udle nezinyatha nezilambi,  
Ubelithemba lezifombo nezifologu,  
Iint'ezingenamva namphambili.*

*Hamba nto kaJonisi, sabela,  
Ubizwe liKomkhul'eliPhezulu,  
Ukuya kwenz'ingxelo ngath'eNyangweni;  
Uthethe ngathi kuSonini-nanini;  
Udik'umAfrika neengxaki zakhe;  
Ku'ukubonil'ukutsha kwakhe,  
Engatshiswa mlil'etshiswa ziinzima,  
Ezenzakalisa umphefumlo kwanenyama.*

*Sithi hamba nto kaJonisi ufezile,  
Wooyisa kwancamek'emhlabeni.  
Kubizwe wena nje kubizw'indoda;  
Namhla sinamakhul'amathemba,  
Ku'uSomandl'uza ku'iindaba;  
Ezingenamphithi zingenangxube,  
Ku'ba wen'ubunath'eAfrika,  
Ubona sih'ekwa naziintaka.*

*Ndlelantle ndod'enkul'ugqibile;  
Ngqongqotho yendoda kwamany'amadoda.  
Thina ma-Afrika sikuvumile.  
Goduka bawo, uye kusithethelela;  
Sitsho nathi noko sidumb'iintliziyi,  
Ku'ba be singathandi kwahlukwa nawe,  
Kwafik'ukufa ngengqumbo nomnqweno —  
"Ubizwa phezulu nguNdikhoyo kamEnzi."*

*Ndingalila ndithini na bawo,  
Gwangqa ndini loinka-Jonisi?  
Ku'ukufa namhla kusongamele,  
Kubethe sonke saza'izigulo.  
Wawafiyi'amadod'esoph'iinhliziyi;  
Wayifiyi'iDjunivesith'imbina-mbineka,  
Elo ziko likhulu lenkanyiso.  
Wawafiyi'ama wen'ebamb'izidlele.*

*Into zooDokhwe zikhedame nedlaka,  
Into zooLewini nezooDyefrisi ziyalila,  
Ku'ba namhla zingumx'omakwangu,  
Ngokungena kwakh'ekuphumleni.*

On you then, O dark-skinned Jones,  
My stone of remembrance do I place,  
You grown-up calf of a bull of Wales.  
When Britain had need of you,  
You left to come to Africa,  
To eat with fools, the starving too,  
A hope to the hunch-backed, deformed to be,  
Those things with neither past nor future.

Respond then, son of Jones,  
The Great Place you has called,  
About us in heaven to talk,  
To Father Timeless make report,  
Of handicaps and smothered freedom,  
That burns us as you know,  
Our fire is rasping insult,  
That weakens soul and wounds the flesh.

Well done, O son of Jones,  
Undoubted your victory is on earth,  
A real man has been called away,  
This day great hopes we have in us,  
That Omnipotence the news will hear,  
In pure unmixed content from you,  
In Africa you lived with us,  
And saw how birds on us did laugh.

Farewell, great one, your work is done,  
In speech, in act you did excell,  
You were with us in spirit and in deed.  
Go home then, father, ambassador to be,  
We say, though pained at heart indeed,  
We did not wish that you should go,  
Called death with lust and wanton fury,  
"The Everlasting One has bid you come."

My tongue is numbed and lost in woe,  
White father, son to Jones' wife.  
This day reigns death on us supreme,  
With horrid, scornful, sickening victory.  
The hearts of men bleed red in anguish,  
Which causes your own on cheeks to hold,  
And Wits. the sting of sorrow feels,  
That great hearth whence comes the light.

The son of Doke is sorry by the graveside,  
So too the son of Lewin and son of Jeffreys;  
This day has dreaded sorrow their home besieged,  
As rest eternal his share becomes.



*Uya lil'umzi wooVul'indlela,  
Ngesambantlanya sokumka kwakho,  
Ubuyintsika nexhasa kuwo,  
Engenamdintsi natyheneba.*

*Ngala mazwi bawo siyendisela,  
Siziboph'amanxeba sizintlinini,  
Sizithuthuzel'esinghaleni;  
KuB'ukufa kusigonyamele,  
Kwasihluth'onk'amalungelo;  
Ukuz'ubiwe singazi lutho,  
Be sisakujongil'embusweni,  
Kumahla-ndinyuk'eliphakade.*

*Hamba ke Gwangqa lomka-Jonisi,  
Ngonyam'elizwi limntyangampo,  
Eth'ukunxakama yeenz'umpongampo;  
Zaxokozel'ingxangxasi zeLigwa,  
Zahlokom'ezeGqili nezomIugwane,  
Zibikel'exomBafse neNciba;  
Kwavuk'izitatu nezitawuwa,  
Kwaphel'ukunditha nokundilatha.*

*Ngamana waphumla kamnandi ngoxolo,  
Ndlov'enkul'edl'igoduka,  
Ndun'enkul'engafanele kufa;  
Nangok'akufil'ulel'ubuthongo.  
Ngoko ke Tshawe lasemzini,  
Namhla sikuyaleza xwi linye —  
Ma x'ungasilibal'eNyangweni,  
Simke nathi sisathandw'emhlabeni,  
Ngenxa yomhl'ozu kusiphuthuma,  
Itsh'imBongi, atsh'ama-Afrika,  
Ma kube njalo.*

The Pathfinder Scouts pipe shrill their farewell,  
In mournful notes because tragic is your demise,  
Their centre pillar and sustenance you always  
Always loved and never hated. [were,

These words, O father, our acceptance affirm,  
In tears we tend and dress our wounds,  
Ourselves though grieved in mind we comfort,  
For like a lion has death on you descended,  
While stunned by this our right was seized,  
To know when death to you should come,  
We looked on you in government matters,  
To guide our feet in ups and downs.

Farewell, you son of Mrs. Jones,  
Whiteman, you lion with roar so plaintive,  
That rumbles, and hearts of men go frantic,  
The falls of the Vaal resound confused,  
And those of the Orange and Caledon re-echo,  
The messages cross country to the Bashee and the  
Awakening the slow and feeble in mind, [Ke',  
With news announced, doubts and rumbling  
ended.

May peace so still around you dwell,  
Big elephant that knew man's end,  
Great one unfit to be touched by death,  
Even now we see no death, you sleep.  
And so you, prince from far-off lands,  
To you this day one thing we say,  
Remember your children when talking in heaven,  
That they from earth so loved may go.  
The days draw nigh with death's sad tale,  
The bard says this, and Africans Amen.

# THE FUNCTION OF ANNUAL FIRST FRUIT CEREMONIES IN BACA SOCIAL STRUCTURE<sup>1</sup>

W. D. HAMMOND-TOOKE

## SYNOPSIS

*Annual first fruit ceremonies appear to have been a prominent feature of the Nguni culture complex in the past and, while to-day the impressive ceremonial has fallen into disuse among many tribes who formerly performed it, it is still an important pivotal rite among a few, notably the Swazi and Baca. This paper refers to the two related tribes of Baca in the Mount Frere district.*

*There are two main views of the ceremonies' function and significance, viz, that they are purely a harvest festival, a sacrilization of the crops, and that they are a magico-political ritual closely associated with the tribal well-being and the system of army doctorings. The writer considers that, for the Baca at least, the latter is the correct interpretation, although present practice may be a development from an earlier, purely agricultural, ceremony.*

*The Baca festival (ingcube) takes place at the time of the ripening of the crops, usually in February or March, and, until it has been performed, no male may partake of the green stuffs of the fields. The full ritual may only be performed by a reigning chief (inkosi enkulu) and takes place over three days — from the Wednesday to the Friday of ingcube week. Just before, warriors are sent into the surrounding fields of alien tribes to collect green maize, calabash and sweet reed and, after cooking on a sacred fire, these are ritually tasted by the chief, followed by the male members of the tribe. The main features of the cycle are as follows: a march past of the army before the chief accompanied by martial songs and warcries, a ritual spitting of medicines towards the surrounding tribes (ukukhafula), the washing of the army in the river with special protective medicines, the killing of a sacrificial bull with the eating of its medicated flesh and a specific doctoring of the army by the tribal magician. An analysis of the symbolism inherent in the ritual would seem to emphasize the martial and protective function of the festival and its importance in supporting the solidarity and integrity of the tribal entity.*

THE BACA are a tribe of Nguni stock occupying the mountainous region of the confluence of the Kinira and Umzimvuŭ Rivers, East Griqualand. The area of tribal settlement is practically co-extensive with the district of Mount Frere, although about 600 Baca live across the Umzimvuŭ in the Mount Ayliff district under Xesibe chiefs and there are offshoots of the tribe in the Bulwer, Ixopo and Umzimkulu districts of southern Natal. The Native Affairs Department Survey Report (1949) gave the area of the Mount Frere district as

684 square miles with an overall Native population of 49,953 — a density of 73.03 persons per square mile. The population is not homogeneous, however, and the tribal area includes about 1,000 Hluŭi, 500 Xesibe as well as other small groups such as Mfengu, Mpondo and Griqua (Coloured) who form pockets of settlement and who come under the jurisdiction of the Baca chiefs. Mount Frere is one of a number of similar districts which go to form the large block of territory set aside for exclusive Native occupation and

<sup>1</sup> The material on which this paper is based was collected during field investigations in 1949 financed by an *ad hoc* grant from the National Council for Social

Research. It is hoped that a complete study of Baca society will be published at a later date in the form of a monograph.



officially known as the United Transkeian Territories.

The Baca are one of a large group of tribes owing their genesis to the disruptive wars of the Tjshakan ascendancy in Natal and the resultant emmigration from their original homes. Possibly of Lala origin, the Baca and the related Wufe, who had been practically dismembered in the chaos of the early nineteenth century, fled from Tjshaka under the leadership of the great magician-chief Madzikane and, after many vicissitudes (including a lengthy sojourn in Pondoland under Faku), eventually settled in their present locality. There are two tribes of Baca in the Mount Frere district, the senior, and numerically weaker, under the Nomtsheketjhe chiefs with its capital at Mpoza,<sup>1</sup> and the powerful junior section under chief Wabane Makaula. Little is known of their original culture and great changes have taken place in the years of wandering, the extensive contact with the Mpondo during an unsettled period probably considerably influencing indigenous culture. The Baca have retained, however, among other things, their peculiar *tsefula* form of speech (strongly reminiscent of Swazi), a distinctive method of family organization (there is no system of righthand and lefthand houses as found among other Nguni tribes) and a particular variant of the annual first fruits ceremony, called by them, *ingcube*. In this article the nature and possible significance of the ceremony will be discussed and an attempt made to assess its function in Baca society.

#### PRELIMINARIES TO INCUBE

It is difficult to obtain a clear and connected account of the *ingcube* ceremony, as it occurred formerly, in the detail considered essential for sociological analysis. With the introduction of Christianity and the imposition of European political

control, important modifications have been imposed on the cycle of rites, and some of the most impressive ceremonies, with their important symbolism, are to-day omitted. No longer is the black bull killed by the gashing of its chest with an axe and the severance of the wind-pipe by hand; nor is the skull of a slain enemy necessary at the installation of a chief. Both have been condemned by the Administration and western public opinion and strictly forbidden. It appears that the ceremonial was last performed in its entirety by Chief Mngcisana in 1926: the last few decades have seen a marked modification in the attitude of many people to *ingcube* and an increasing slackness in the detailed observance of the custom. There is, to-day, considerable difference in attitude to the *ingcube* ceremonies. Mpoza, the reservoir of custom and stronghold of conservatism, still reveres the ancient ritual but, under the mission-educated Wabane, it is fast falling into disuse in the Makaula area, depending, as it does, on the participation and initiative of the chief. The full pageant may be performed only by a "great chief" (*inkosi enkulu*) and unfortunately during my investigations the Mpoza section was under the regency of Kutshiwa Nomtsheketjhe, brother of the late Chief Sikhande, during the minority of the latter's son and I did not have the opportunity of witnessing the magico-religious aspects of the ritual.<sup>2</sup>

In preparing this description, therefore, recourse has had to be made to the accounts of those who remember the *ingcube* as it used to be enacted before 1926, of those who saw it performed within recent years, and to what I myself have witnessed in the rather attenuated form of to-day. Difficulty has been experienced in sifting the often contradictory accounts, culled from the members of two rival tribes,<sup>3</sup> but, as far as I can ascertain, the following is an accurate composite account of the ceremony.

No one knows to-day who instituted the cere-

<sup>1</sup> The senior tribe occupies the following locations: Mpoza, Colana, Nomkolokoto, Siqhingeni, Ntsimangweni. The other 31 locations are under the jurisdiction of the Makaula chiefs.

<sup>2</sup> I am greatly indebted to Acting Chief Kutshiwa and his headmen for their kindness in staging for my benefit various episodes of the *ingcube* cycle, omitting, however, the actual use of the sacred medicines and

formulae, thus providing an insight into the social matrix and providing the "atmosphere" unattainable from mere second-hand description.

<sup>3</sup> There is considerable jealousy between the two sections mainly due to the question of precedence in political and ritual matters, resulting occasionally in bloodshed.

mony. Sages suggest that it originated with the revered Madzikane, but this seems unlikely as first fruit ceremonies are a general feature of Nguni culture, with roots deep in the past. Thus it would seem that *ingcube* has been practised since time immemorial, first among the clans of Zelemu and Wufe and, later, by their "legal heirs", the Baca under Madzikane. It is probable that celebration was suspended during the years of trekking with no settled home, particularly as the custom is associated with the presence of crops and geared to the agricultural cycle.

*Ingcube* always takes place at the end of summer when the maize, kaffir-corn and pumpkins are ripening — usually during February or early March.<sup>1</sup> Unlike the *incwala* ceremony among the Swazi,<sup>2</sup> where the date of the celebration is related to phases of the moon, this does not seem to be the case to-day among the Baca, the date for *ingcube* being decided upon by the chief in consultation with the tribal magician (*inyanga yempi*: the herbalist of the army). It is possible that this was so formerly, however, as certain old informants maintained that *ingcube* should take place correctly at the new moon. It was also stated that it should rain at the time of the celebrations, and it is possible, as Marwick suggests,<sup>3</sup> that the stipulated black colour of the sacrificial bull is associated with rain-making. Before the ceremony is performed no one may eat of the green stuffs from the fields for, if this taboo is broken, it is said that the army would become weak and easily overcome by its enemies. The extent to which this rule is observed to-day differs between individuals and, particularly in the Makaula section, observance has tended to become very lax — but only, apparently, within recent years. Mfaḡa, my interpreter, who lived near the Makaula Great Place maintained that as late as

1938, anyone caught eating the first fruits before the chief had ritually partaken was called before him and severely reprimanded. In 1940, however, there was a drought and social opinion became lax; "everyone was starving and it did not matter."<sup>4</sup> Actually, much depends upon individuals and, especially at Mpoza and environs, among some the taboo is still rigorously adhered to. Dingane and Hooper, uninhibited young men, both refused to eat green mealies before *ingcube*, giving as their respective reasons, "I wish to keep the old customs", and "to eat makes men weak and unable to fight". The taboo applies particularly to men, women and children being permitted to eat if they wish,<sup>5</sup> and this seems to bear out the theory, developed below, that the *ingcube* is primarily a socio-political ritual closely associated with the well-being of the tribe and its army.

Some time before *ingcube* the tribal herbalist goes into the forests that clothe the mountain kloofs with his assistant to collect the medicinal herbs and vegetable substances necessary for the ceremony. These medicines belong to the species *itihlambeto* and are extremely potent. They are brought back and stored at the back of a special hut in the royal kraal set aside for them, called *nondlu ayivalwa* (the open hut) because of the fact that it is never shut during the reign of a chief, only during a regency. In this hut, too, are kept the horns of medicine and ritual paraphernalia handed down from former chiefs endowed with peculiar sacredness.<sup>6</sup> Preparations are also made by the common people. Cattle and goats are slaughtered to provide the skin skirts of the women, and men and boys practise racing the cattle in readiness for the great cattle race that forms a prominent part of the ceremonies. A short time before the start of the ritual men are sent by the chief into the *isidudu* (a mixture of pumpkin and green mealies) at our home already."

<sup>6</sup> If, however, a woman was seen carrying green stuffs from the fields she could be brought before the chief for a serious offence — "She would be weakening the knees of the *impi*."

<sup>5</sup> The hut at Mpoza recently collapsed, destroying the ancient medicine, but the herbalist immediately restored them; "The record is still kept." At the Makaula capital, the huge smoke-blackened antelope horns, spears and *ingcube* headdress of Mngcisa can still be seen, but to-day no one knows their correct function or significance.

<sup>1</sup> Some dates of *ingcube* I was able to obtain are: 24th February 1925; 16th March 1926; 4th March 1927; 7th March 1929; 14th March 1930.

<sup>2</sup> MARWICK, B.A., 1940, pp. 182-95.

<sup>3</sup> Op. cit., p. 194.

<sup>4</sup> Mfaḡa related to me graphically the first hint of the changing attitude as it appeared to him: "One day I was returning through the fields with some friends from hunting birds. Feeling hungry we decided to pick some *imfe* (sweet reed). One boy objected and said that *ingcube* had not yet been performed. But another said, "That's nothing; we have been eating



forests and river valleys to cut bush for a special cattle kraal to be erected near the Great Place. It is circular in shape, constructed entirely of brushwood, and is called *isibaya sengcube* (the cattle kraal of *ingcube*). It is round this kraal that the pageant of the first fruit ceremony is centred.

Practising for the cattle race continues for about a week before the commencement of *ingcube*. In the Mpoza section it is from the Siqhingeni, a tributary of the Mvenyane River, to the Great Place, while the Makaula section race their cattle from Cancele to the Great Place at Lugangeni, a distance of about three miles. The practising ends on the Saturday before *ingcube* week.

#### THE CYCLE OF RITES

*Ingcube* proper extends over a period of three days, invariably from Wednesday to Friday. On the Tuesday certain men are called to the Great Place and instructed by the chief to go secretly into the surrounding tribal areas, viz., those of Mpondo, Xesiße and Hlufi, and each bring back two cobs of green maize, two roots of the sweet cane (*imfe*) and green calabash (*uselwa*). This expedition is called *ukudwaba* and it is said that formerly an enemy tribesman also had to be killed and his flesh used with the medicines. The first *ingcube* after the installation of a chief was always of especial significance, and the ritual dictated that the skull of a slain enemy be used as a receptacle by the new chief when washing with the tribal medicines. A fresh skull had to be secured at each chief's installation, and would then serve for all the *iingcube* of his reign. "When the men return the green foods are placed separately in the Great Hut" (possibly the *nondlu ayivalwa* — I was unable to ascertain this point).

The next morning (Wednesday) the chief goes to the newly built *isibaya sengcube* wearing a special blanket called *isibalala*. For days before hand he has washed himself with potent medicines in preparation for the coming ceremonies, when he must

take upon his humanity the identity of the tribe and approach the spirits of his fathers, manipulating their medicines against the dark forces which oppose and strive to disrupt the tribe.<sup>1</sup> It is a time of strain, when every fibre and nerve is taut, and fraught with danger from the "dark" medicines that are in conflict, invisibly, all around. Since the preceding evening warriors from the various districts of the tribal area have been arriving at the Great Place. They sleep in the *isibaya sengcube*, and, during the night, special herbs are burnt there so that the smoke, passing over the warriors, protects them from harmful magic possibly directed against them, and strengthens them for the part they have to play on the morrow. During Wednesday morning more men arrive from the out-lying areas. They come on horseback and on foot in groups of about thirty to forty under their headmen, dressed in full regalia and singing the traditional *ingcube* songs. Most discard European trousers and wear the traditional *unontswintswintswi*, or salampore loincloth, with circlets of skin or cloth on their shins and caps of animal skin. All carry sticks or spears, those on horseback carrying them in a skin scabbard behind the saddle, while many of the footmen carry large ox-hide shields and run round the horsemen of their group, brandishing their sticks in mock combat.

The chief receives them as they arrive at the gate of the *isibaya*, sitting with his councillors and herbalist. The body of horse- and footmen stops before the chief and greets him with a concerted shout of :

"Dabul' amanti! Aaaaaaaah! Dabul' amanti!  
(the chief's praise)  
"Siya khulela!" ("We have come to beg!")

Now and then a warrior dashes out from the group, brandishing his sticks and shield, and pretends to manoeuvre up to an enemy, stabbing the ground and shouting war cries, advancing until right in front of the chief, encouraged by the shouts of his fellows, and finally returning to the main body. All this while the men who arrived the previous night

<sup>1</sup> This is my own interpretation of the situation based on the use of special *intseleti* medicines (used particularly against supernatural agencies such as *Thi-*

*kolofe* and other specifically "strengthening," concoctions, associated with the chieftainship.

are formed in a wide semi-circle facing the *incube* cattle kraal, stamping and singing the *incube* war songs. Suddenly the newly-arrived group wheels round and gallops out of the circle, followed by the men on foot at a run. They dismount on the hillside above the Great Place, and, leaving their horses to graze, the group reforms into a close phalanx and slowly approaches the *isibaya*, joining in the song which is being sung by the circle of warriors:

"Woyi! Woyi! Woyi! Watsh' umGambezi! Ha! Ha! Watsh' umGambezi!"

They then merge with the circle. The song is sung over and over with stamping of feet and sticks held stiffly, vertically, in front of the body.

During the morning groups of women have also arrived at the Great Place clad in their *incube* attire of beadwork, freshly worked skin skirts and dyed ostrich plumes, with large leather rattles filled with pebbles tied to their ankles. While the men are singing they perform a slow, heavy-footed, shuffling dance (*ukutshakisa*) across the area between the *isibaya sengcube* and the semi-circle of warriors accompanied by a high-pitched ululation:

"Huuuuu! Kwepe! Kwepe! Kwepe! Kwepe!"

and the slapping of small, round, hide shields against their thighs to accentuate the rhythm.

At a signal, the semi-circle of warriors slowly closes in on the chief, who is still sitting at the gate of the *isibaya* with the tribal magician and the latter's assistant (*uhlakane*). They advance slowly, stamping and singing, until almost touching the chief and then turn and shuffle back. Every now and then individuals dart out from the formations, wildly stabbing at the ground and beating their shields with their sticks and spears. The song has now changed:

"O uyingonyama!

Haha! Haha!

Siya kwahlul' amakhosi amhlope!

Siya kutshona kwa Bumba!

<sup>1</sup> C.f. the similar method reported from among the Swazi (MARWICK, op. cit., pp. 13, 77-78). The operation is called *ukuphehla lwatsi* (B. *ukuphemba uvatsi*). The Swazi use of fire-sticks is practically confined to ritual occasions, e.g. the burning of grass round the royal graves and the cooking of a doctor's medicines. The concord of the Baca word *uvatsi* is *lu*.

<sup>2</sup> When this was demonstrated to me the wood

Ho! Simensinje omngcange!

Iya hlabana! Iya hlabana!"

"O, you are a lion!

Haha! Haha!

We will defeat the white chiefs!

We will disappear at Bumba!

Ho! We do it like this!

It (the *impi*) stabs another."

Early on the Wednesday morning the *inyanga yempi* kindles the sacred fire. This must not be lit with matches but in the traditional manner by using fire-sticks called *uvatsi*.<sup>1</sup> A piece of the very hard, black wood of the *uvatsi* tree, with a conically rounded base, is swiftly rotated between the hands in a hole bored in a section of soft wood (usually the *imiti* reed, used for making sleeping mats) which has been placed on a bed of dried grass mixed with soot (*umle*) and other tinder. Twirling the *uvatsi* is a very laborious operation, as a steady pressure must be kept on the apparatus, and the *inyanga* is relieved by his assistant and other helpers.<sup>2</sup> As the stick rotates backwards and forwards, the soot in the hole begins to glow and is forced out, grass and dried tinder is carefully added and the fire kindled. This ritual fire must not go out until the ceremonies of the Friday are completed. Special clay pots (*imithila*) are fetched from the Great Hut by the herbalist's assistant and filled with water. Green pumpkins (*iiphuri*), brought back from the fields of surrounding tribes by the *ukudwaba* expeditions, are placed in one of these pots and the cobs of green mealies in another, after which they are sealed and placed on the sacred fire to cook.

During the whole of the Wednesday morning the chief has been seated at the entrance of the *incube* cattle kraal with his warriors; in the afternoon they go into the forests where they are doctored with medicines by the *inyanga*.<sup>3</sup> On their return they crowd into the *isibaya* and remain for

smoked but the tinder did not catch alight. Onlookers explained that this was because the *incube* fire should be made in February or March. This was in August.

<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, I was unable to obtain details of this episode in the cycle. The herbalist's office is held by a family in the Zulu (Royal) clan and is hereditary in the male line.



a time singing the sacred songs, while the chief sits in state immediately inside the gate. The herbalist now takes a clay pot containing certain *intseleti* medicines and twirls (*ukuphehla*) a stick in the mixture until it is churned into a foam that spills over the lip of the receptacle. On this the chief removes his blanket, and, clad only in a penis sheath (*incitsho*), walks slowly out of the *isibaya*, accompanied by the tribal magician carrying the pot, and followed by his warriors in a solid phalanx. Slowly the procession moves out of the kraal and out into the veld to the left of the Great Place. This time the men do not sing and the whole ceremony is conducted in complete silence. Even the women looking on, who have kept up their singing and dancing most of the day, are quiet, overawed by the solemnity of the occasion. After about two hundred yards the procession halts, the chief receives the pot of medicine from the herbalist, and takes some of the froth into his mouth. He then executes a little jump into the air, accompanied by a pawing movement in front of him with his hands, and spits the *intseleti* into the air. The whole *impi* then wheels round and, with the chief and magician at the head, walks slowly back, again in complete silence, across the *inkundla* of the Great Place until once again level with the gate of the ceremonial cattle kraal. Here the chief again performs the spitting ritual and the body of men passes on to the right of the royal settlement where the ceremony is repeated. The chief then returns to the *isibaya* and the warriors fan out to re-form the great semi-circle before it. At a sign from the chief they disperse and the rest of the day is spent in beer drinking and feasting. That night the army again sleeps in the *ingcube* cattle kraal.

The above ritual is called *ukukhafula*, which McLaren<sup>1</sup> gives as meaning "to render invulnerable by charms", and is thus part of the magical technique used to strengthen the tribe against its enemies. The medicines are spat out to three quarters of the surrounding country and are apparently aimed at the possibly hostile tribes inhabiting them. The pawing motion described above can

probably be construed as an act of repudiation and scorn. Marwick<sup>2</sup> quoting Cook, reports for the Swazi that the chief spits out some of the gourd (*ukukafula luselwa*) to the east and to the west, but in the analogous Baca ritual this is confined to medicine.<sup>3</sup>

#### THE REVIEW OF THE ARMY

Early on the Thursday morning the chief, with the tribal magician and his assistant, enters the *isibaya sengcube* and washes himself with medicines preparatory to the day's events. At a sign, the warriors again form the great semi-circle in front of the kraal and dance and sing as on the preceding day. Suddenly, at a command from the chief, the formation breaks up, and those that own them run for their horses grazing on the hillside. As soon as they are mounted they form up in a solid phalanx, those on foot falling in behind, and, led by the headman of the district in which the Great Place is situated (usually a brother of the chief), they move down to the river to wash.<sup>4</sup> Singing and shouting, the women follow the men, and, in a mass, the company moves down towards the river.

On arrival the men strip and enter the water while the *inyanga* goes a short way upstream and pours medicines of the *ubulawo* type from a clay pot into the water so that they are carried down to the warriors washing below, strengthening them. The chief does not attend during this operation and remains sitting just inside the gate of the *isibaya*, awaiting their return.

After the ceremony at the river the *impi* returns to the Great Place. Every now and then the horsemen in the lead pause to allow those on foot to catch up, so that the formation is kept close, and, at intervals, exuberant warriors gallop out of the group at full speed, circle, and rejoin the group, while foot men engage in mock combat. As they approach the capital they do not enter immediately, but, as they come parallel to it, turn sharply at right angles to the group of huts and move into

<sup>1</sup> McLaren, J., *A Concise Xhosa-English Dictionary*, 1936, p. 71.

<sup>2</sup> Op. cit., p. 184. See Cook, P. A. W., *Bantu Studies*, IV, 1930, pp. 205-10.

<sup>3</sup> For a diagrammatic representation of this part of the ceremony, see diagram A on p. 81.

<sup>4</sup> The Mpoza *impi* washes in the Mvenyane River or its tributary, the Siqhingeni.

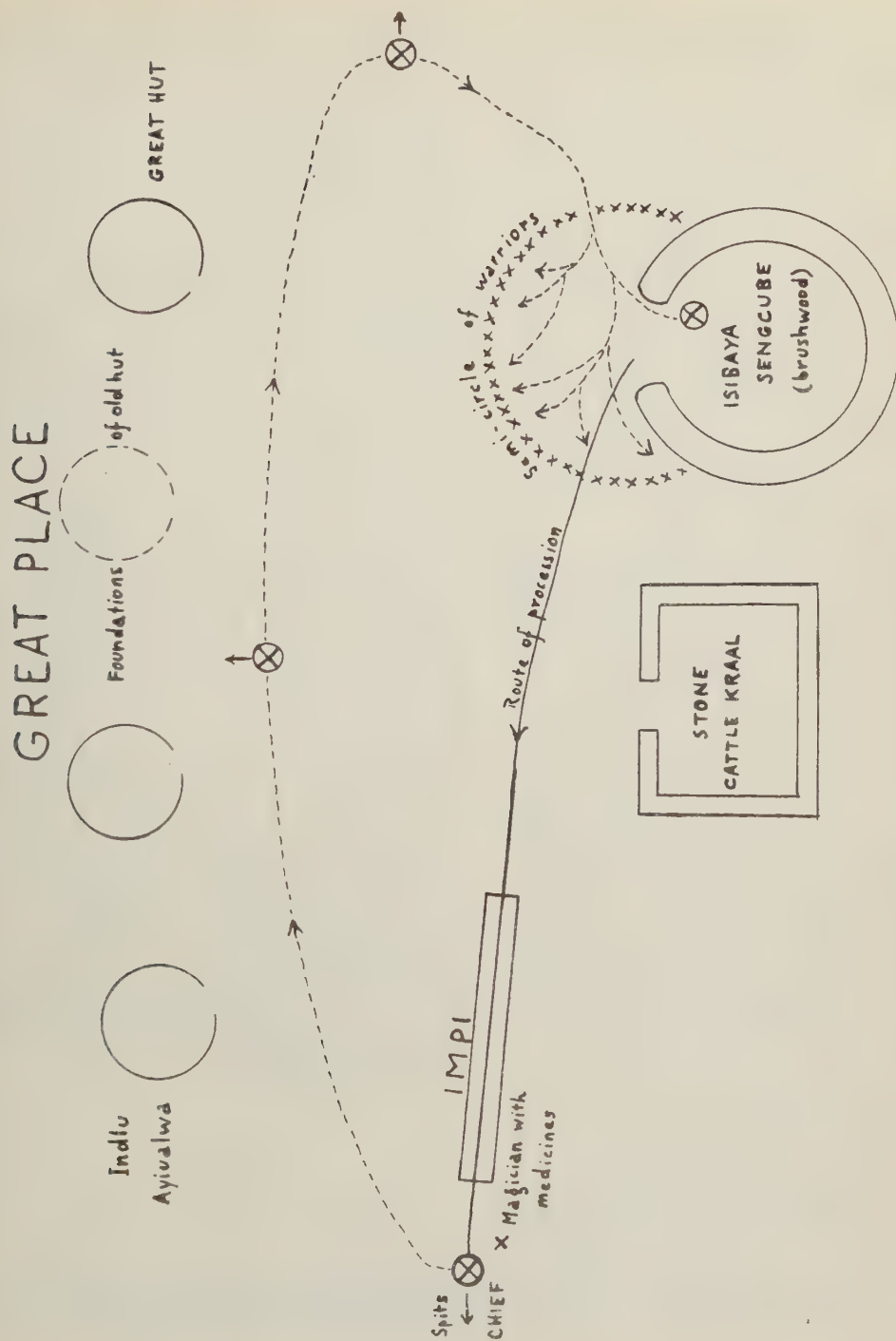


DIAGRAM A. — INGCUBE : PLAN OF THE UKUKHAFULA CEREMONY, MPOZA

Note : The broken line indicates the route taken by the army headed by the chief. The arrows show the fanning out of warriors.



the veld for a few hundred yards. They then wheel round and march past behind the huts of the Great Place singing the *ingcube* songs. During this time the chief is sitting in the gateway of the *isibaya* and is, in fact, reviewing his troops. The "march past" is slow, with frequent pauses so that the foot warriors and the straggling groups of women may catch up, and the royal headman of the Great Place rides along the flanks to regulate the speed. The *impi* moves right across behind the capital and into the veld on the opposite side, again turning sharply and returning, this time between the huts of the royal settlement and the *isibaya*. As they come level with the sacred cattle kraal they suddenly halt and stand motionless before their chief. As can be imagined, this is a most impressive moment. Then, with a shout, the ranks break, and the galloping horsemen fan out round the cluster of huts, yelling and brandishing their sticks.<sup>1</sup>

During the washing in the river the cattle, which have been previously brought to the Great Place from the surrounding districts by their owners in preparation for the great cattle race, are herded by boys near the river, in readiness for this event which takes place on the Thursday afternoon. After midday the young men mount and drive the cattle at full speed from the river to the capital, urging them on with blows and shouts. The race, which takes place over a distance of two or three miles, causes great excitement, as the owner of the beast which comes first will be presented by the chief with an *inchasa* of beer. The cattle, gasping, hollow-flanked and utterly exhausted, are met by the chief in front of the *isibaya*, clad in a loin covering made from long-haired angora skin, and wearing brass bangles on arms and legs. The cattle are surrounded by the *impi* who sing a special song:

"Hayii! Sawugqob' uMvenyane, Hayii! Sakhwel' entabeni, Zhi! Zhi!"

("Hayii! We crossed the Mvenyane, Hayii! We climbed the mountain, Zhi!")

The cattle are then led away by their owners and the rest of the day is spent in beer drinking, singing and dancing.

Thursday is sometimes called "the day of the

<sup>1</sup> See diagram C on p. 83

women" and girls, and groups from the various districts vie with one another in dancing and singing. The women, dressed in new skin skirts and multi-coloured beadwork, perform the special *ukutshhekisa* dance described above, while the girls' dance is called *ukuchiza*. Each unmarried girl carries a tin beaker (*ibekile*) full of brown sugar given to her by her lover – for *ingcube* is the time of *ukundanda*, i.e. the exchange of gifts between lovers. Girls give their sweethearts cigarettes and tobacco and receive handkerchiefs, sweets and lengths of salampore cloth in exchange. A youth's love and regard for his girl friend is measured by the length of the cloth he gives her, and some have been seen as long as fifteen feet. When not exhibited, trailing from the shoulders in a train to its full length, the salampore is wound round and round the body, across the shoulders and between the legs, until it resembles the carapace of a tortoise. Often a considerable amount of money is spent on *ukundanda*, it not being unusual for a youth just back from the mines to spend £6 on his lover. If a girl is not *ukundanda* she is laughed at by her age mates and called an *isifumani* (a person who is not loved). The element of reciprocity is in evidence in these gift-exchanges: "Sometimes a fellow will buy things for a girl who, when asked what she is going to give him in return, says, 'I have nothing.' The man will probably say to the trader, 'Take it all back.'" Married women are often *ukundanda* by husbands on the mines who send the money necessary for the beads and dyed ostrich plumes.

On Thursday evening the men again sleep in the *isibaya* where the *uvatsi* fire is still burning with its sealed pots of gourds and mealies. Before retiring for the night the chief sprinkles the kraal and its environs with medicines to protect it from enemies and harmful magic.

#### FRIDAY:

#### THE KILLING OF THE BULL

The preparatory ceremonies over, the *ingcube* ritual passes into its final phases with the sacrificing of a bull and the doctoring of the tribal army.

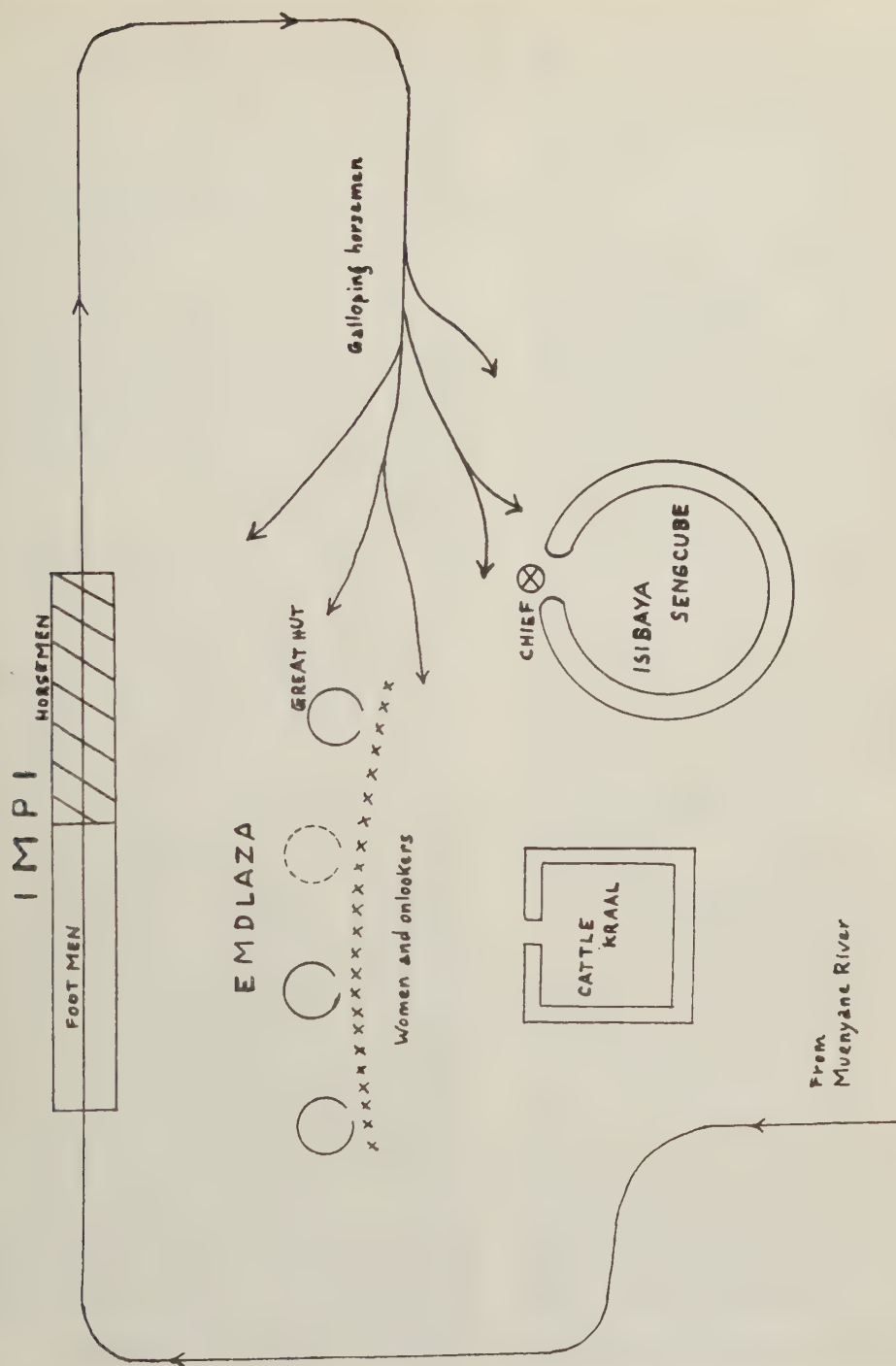


DIAGRAM C. — INGUCUBE: THE MARCH PAST OF THE ARMY, MPOZA

Plan of the review by the chief of the tribal army after its return from the ritual washing. The chief does not accompany them and waits for them at the gate of the *ingcube* cattle kraal.



Early on the Friday morning a bull is driven, with the other cattle of the herd to make it tractable, from the royal kraal into the *isibaya sengcube*. It is called *ulwathsabathsela* and is usually black or of a dark colour. It is immediately seized by the young men and thrown to the ground; no ropes may be used, the whole operation being performed by the bare hands. This feat is not without its hazards to life and limb as the bull struggles powerfully, but at length it is thrown on to its side. To-day the beast is promptly dispatched with a spear: formerly a sharp spear was taken and one of the forelegs cut off at the knee joint. As the mutilated animal staggered, bellowing, to its feet, the warriors set up a shout of "*Dabul' itulu!*" (lit. "to cross the heavens", fig. "to break through an enemy"). The skin was removed from the severed foreleg and the muscle and bone separated, the chief passing his hand through the gap thus formed and pushing the leg up his arm to just below the elbow. Then, as the stricken beast wandered, hobbling, about the kraal, the chief took an assegai and, after calling on the spirits of the tribal ancestors, approached it, manoeuvring up to it as to an enemy. The symbolism of this rite seems fairly patent. It is part of the thesis of this paper that the bull is ritually identified with the enemies of the tribe, i.e. all non-Baca groups (a typical "ingroup" attitude to the alien), and the severing of the foreleg, accompanied by the warcry, implies the defeat and crippling of the foe. Just as the crippled bull staggers and falls, so will the enemy falter and be defeated. It is significant that the young men, the warriors who form the basis of the tribal army, combine to overcome the *ulwathsabathsela*, and the fact that no weapons are used seems to indicate their immeasurable superiority over the enemy. At a further sign from the chief the young men again seize the bull, now much weakened by loss of blood, and throw it.<sup>1</sup> The chief takes an axe and with it gashes the chest of the prostrate beast, inserts his arm up to the elbow and breaks the windpipe (*umbinzo*) causing it to die in a few seconds.<sup>2</sup> The carcass is immediately skinned by the warriors and cut up. All the flesh is

removed, including the ribs and limbs, the backbone being left with the head attached. The legs are sent to a hut while the intestines are given to the old women as a great delicacy.

Then follows another vignette which again symbolizes the conflict between the tribe, embodied in the chief, and the enemy, represented by the bull. The grotesque head of the bull, with the bloodstained backbone and tail still attached, is lifted up bodily by four or five young men and carried before the chief who grips it by the distended nostrils and leads it out of the *isibaya*, the procession eventually halting in front of the Great Hut. Another version states that the young men pretend to gore the chief with the head of the bull — a similar piece of symbolism. Just so will the chief lead the defeated *impis* of the enemy and remain himself unscathed. The bones of the *ulwathsabathsela* are then burnt and thrown away. After this episode the chief re-enters the Great Hut and the warriors once more return to the river, where they wash, after smearing themselves on the forehead, chin, cheeks, thighs and shins with white ochre (*umgqabo*) to fortify themselves against the dangers inherent in the approaching ritual.

On their return they are met at the gate of the cattle kraal by the chief and the tribal magician. Those on horseback dismount and join the warriors on foot in another semi-circle before the *isibaya*, swaying to a rhythmical, stamping dance and chanting the repetitive phrases of the *ingcube* songs. At an order from the chief the assemblage closes in on the kraal, and enters the brushwood circle in single file. By this time the meat of the slaughtered bull has been cut up and lightly roasted with medicines, "ground fine and spread over it like salt", on the *uvatsi* fire, and then piled at the gate of the kraal. When all are inside the chief takes a collop of meat (*umbengo*), "black with medicines", bites a piece off and throws it to the man nearest him, who takes a bite, rubs it quickly on his joints, and throws it to his neighbour in his turn. If a piece falls to the ground it is left, for, it is said, an enemy has fallen, and to pick it up would be to revive him. Some say, however, that the young boys are

<sup>1</sup> I use the present tense for convenience. To-day a spear is used and the animal killed almost instantly.

neously. The accompanying interpretation is again a personal one. <sup>2</sup> Cf. MARWICK, op. cit., p. 189.

allowed to pick up the fallen pieces. No woman may take part in this ritual. After the meat, the green stuffs which have been simmering since the Wednesday on the *uvatsi* fire are ritually tasted and spat out (*ukucela*) by the chief, followed by the rest of the men of the tribe. The whole of the above ritual is orientated towards the repudiation of the enemy, identified with the bull, and the green food stolen from alien fields.

## FRIDAY:

## THE DOCTORING OF THE ARMY

The cycle of *ingcube* rites culminates in a specific doctoring of the army by the tribal magician who is paid for his services with a beast (at the last

Mpoza *ingcube*, a horse). The whole *impi* again forms the great semi-circle facing the entrance of the *isibaya*. The chief sits inside the doorway on the left with the herbalist and assistant. A pot of specially potent medicines has been prepared and, with this carried by the assistant, the herbalist walks swiftly round the semi-circle of warriors standing in complete silence, and sprinkles each man and his weapons with a bunch of dry grass dipped in the pot. Coming to the end of the line he repeats the performance in the opposite direction and re-enters the kraal.<sup>1</sup>

The rest of the day is spent in feasting and dancing, and the following morning the people drift back to their homes in the districts. Although the bones of the bull are destroyed by burping, the

## GREAT PLACE

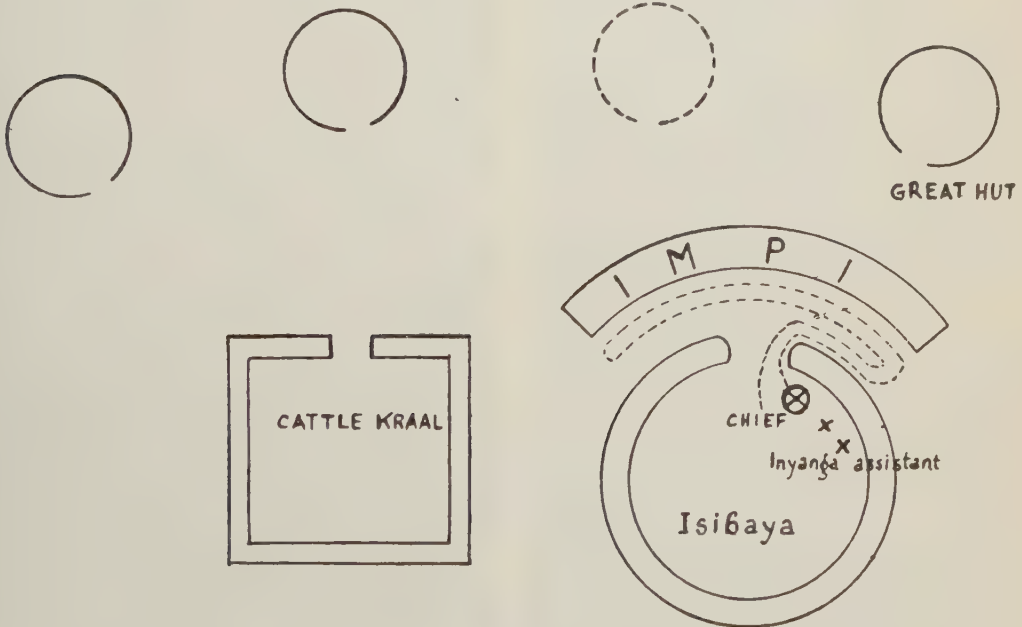


DIAGRAM B. — INCUBE: PLAN OF THE DOCTORING OF THE ARMY, MPOZA

brushwood *isibaya sengcube* is left till the following year when it will be pulled down and a new one erected. Unlike the Mpondo, medicated first fruits

are not eaten in the private homes of the tribesmen, the ceremony among the Baca being confined to the tribal celebrations. Although *ingcube* is a time of beer drinks, dancing and feasting, its deep

<sup>1</sup> See diagram B below.



importance for the tribal weal is emphasized by the total prohibition of sexual intercourse during the week of ceremonies. This seems to be linked to two different cultural elements — the belief that sexual connection negatives the power of medicines, and the abstention from intercourse during times of national danger when the army is mobilized and away from home.

#### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF INCUBE

The meaning of annual first fruit ceremonies has engaged the attention of several writers who have sought to elicit its function in society. There are two main views: that the ceremonies are a first fruit sacrifice orientated primarily towards the new crops, and that they are a magico-religious cycle of rites aimed at the protection and maintenance of the social and political structure. Malinowski<sup>1</sup> points out that "food has also a conspicuous role in ceremonies of a distinctly religious character. First fruit offerings of a ritual nature, harvest ceremonies, big seasonal feasts in which the crops are accumulated, displayed and, in one way or another, sacralized, play an important part among agricultural peoples . . . All such acts express the joy of the community, their sense of the great value of food, and religion, through them, consecrates the reverent attitude of man towards his daily bread." He traces the development from the fear of starvation to the rise of a feeling of dependence on Providence, and of gratitude and confidence in it. "We have seen that food is the primary link between the primitive and providence."<sup>2</sup>

Gluckman agrees with this view. In an analysis of the analogous *umkhosi* ceremony of the Zulu<sup>3</sup> he describes the ceremonies as a first fruit sacrifice directed towards the ripening crops, a protection of the people against the strange vitalizing power of the green shoots, the former being themselves purified lest they "spoil" the all-important food supply. The purification is effected through the chief or king who is heavily medicated before approaching the food. He suggests that the politico-military aspect of the ceremony, so prominent

among both Zulu and Baca to-day, is a secondary accretion to the original purpose of the ceremony, probably introduced by warrior chiefs such as Tjhaka and Madzikane. Gluckman considers the economic and nutritional aspects of the ceremony as fundamental — a control of the energies developed from the new food (which often lead to drunkenness and quarrels, especially if the crops of neighbours ripen at different times,<sup>4</sup>) the canalization of the pulsing life, both mental and physical, that comes with the end of dearth and the marked increase in the food supply, and the control of thriftlessness. The ceremonies also have a religious aspect as the tribal ancestors are called to share in the feasting and the rite is, in part, a thanksgiving to them for the safe arrival of the harvest. Following van Gennep we can again consider the *incube* as a *rite de passage*, the transition from the old to the new year. As the Baca themselves say, "We are letting the year pass", and, from the more sophisticated, "The *incube* is the Baca New Year", "It is like Christmas."

"The real meaning of *incube* is the crown of the chief"; "It is to show that the chief is great by the calling of men together"; "It protects the people from being weak, especially during war"; these are the statements of chief's councillors and old men, and it seems certain that, to-day at least, the main purpose of the Baca first fruit ritual is the strengthening of the office of chieftainship and, through it, the tribe and tribal army. In the foregoing description of the ceremonies we have all along noted the symbolism of the ritual, and its constant play on the antagonism of the tribe against its enemies. In certain contexts the army itself, in song, dance and mock battle, demonstrates its solidarity and power, in others it and the tribe are identified in the person of the chief, as in the actual killing of the bull and in the *ukukhafula* with its gestures of disdain and belligerence directed towards the surrounding foe.

It appears that the original character of the festival among the Baca has been modified through years of wandering through a northern Cape con-

<sup>1</sup> *Magic, Science and Religion*, 1948, Free Press, p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>3</sup> GLUCKMAN, M., 1938, "Social Aspects of first fruit ceremonies among the South-Eastern Bantu", *Africa*, 11,

pp. 25-41.  
<sup>4</sup> He quotes Ashton as saying that the Southern Sotho, who do not have first fruits ceremonies, always hide green crops from their neighbours when they ripen.

vulsed with intertribal wars and migrations of fleeing tribal fragments, the essentially agriculturally orientated ritual being superseded in importance by the military aspect with its accompanying consolidation of tribal sentiments and interests. It is interesting to note that Hunter<sup>1</sup> comes to the same conclusions in her study of the Mpondo, among whom the ceremony appears to have ceased to be a vital part of tribal life. She states, "I am aware that first-fruits ceremonies have other aspects in other Bantu communities, and that this view of them will be queried; but with such information as is now obtainable in Pondoland it is impossible to regard the first-fruit ceremonies otherwise than as one in the series of army treatments." The only feature in the Baca ceremonies which to-day reflects the original nature of the *ingcube* is the fact that it is geared to the agricultural cycle, also acting as a form of economic control, but, even here, the breaking of the taboo against eating the new crops is stated to "make the knees of the army weak", and to undermine the fabric of the society from a military point of view. Every statement made by modern Baca refers to the importance of keeping the tribe "strong". All the main features of the ritual bear this out. In the first place the taboos against eating the green stuffs apply only to men, the mainstay of the tribal army: "It makes men weak and unable to fight." Then the stealing of the green maize cobs, calabash and sweet reed from the surrounding fields of strange tribes is a display of tribal prowess, spiced with the possibility of capture, while the killing of a man on the occasion of a chief's first *ingcube* after his succession again illustrates this point. It is significant that the warriors come to the Great Place fully armed, indulge in mock battles with one another and sing martial songs, and that the doctoring of the army includes the sprinkling of the weapons by the *inyanga yempi*. Then, too, two of the most important episodes are the march past of the army before the chief, who sits and reviews the long phalanx of horse- and footmen in the gate of the cattle kraal, and the river washing of the *impi* with medicines. The ritual of the Friday, with the killing of the bull,

further illustrates this. The bull must be thrown by the young warriors without ropes, a demonstration of their strength and bravery, and, as we have seen, the bull can only be understood as the representation of the enemy.

Apart from the obviously militaristic character of the role of the army in the *ingcube* cycle, there is a perhaps more important and significant feature — the identification of the chief with the tribe. All the complex emotions and values are concentrated in the person of the chief who thus becomes the visible symbol of these attitudes. It is not only the chief, in his private capacity, who is strengthened with the medicines of *ingcube*: it is the tribe which is objectified, "made flesh" and visibly reinvigorated. It is also significant that the army, the material evidence of the tribe's physical strength and virility, plays such a prominent part in the series of rites. "*Ingcube* is done properly when the country is at war." For the above reasons I consider that the main function of *ingcube* to-day is a socio-political one — the consolidation of the tribe, the raising of the self-consciousness of the tribal entity. In former days the ceremony was particularly associated with the installation of a new chief, and it was then that the supreme act of danger, the killing of an enemy and the utilization of part of the skull as a washpot for the chief's medicines, was performed.

There are other secondary, but important, aspects. During the performance of the ritual the spirits of the great chiefs of yore, who themselves performed the ceremonies in the stirring days of the past, are evoked, and informants say that the "dark" medicines used by the chief actually represent the spirits (*amathfongo*) of his ancestors — a purely religious aspect of the rites. By *ingcube*, too, an important tool is forged whereby the chief can regulate the harvest, the central point in the agricultural cycle, in the same way as he influences the sowing, planting and ploughing, and the fertility cults of rain-making and the blessing of the seed.

Surrounded throughout the dangerous marginal period of the rites by his army, the chief re-lives in symbolic ritual the vigour and power of the tribe, and demonstrates its overwhelming superiority over other tribal groups.

<sup>1</sup> HUNTER, M., *Reaction to Conquest*, p. 404.



## BOOKS IN REVIEW

### **Les Pygmées du Congo Belge.** PAUL SCHEBESTA.

Trans. from the German by Henri Plard.  
(Institut Royal Col. Belge, Brussels : 1952.)  
400 fr. Belg.

The present work is based on Dr. Schebesta's original research on all Central African Pygmies, published as a series of volumes, *Die Bambuti-Pygmaen vom Ituri*. From this he has taken whatever refers to the Belgian Congo tribes, and brought it together within the range of a single volume. He treats here of four groups: the Batswa of Equatorial Province, the Babinga, the Batwa of Kivu-Ruanda and the Bambuti of the Ituri, discussing them in relation to their not very different geographical environments. A fairly full account is given of their morphology, physical anthropology, physiology and pathology, before turning to a more detailed account of ethnography, sociology and some discussion on the question of language.

The Bambuti constitute the purest strain, and it is curious to note that this purity has been maintained by the simple action of agreement; any children of mixed parentage go to the fathers' tribe, hence (as only mixture between Negro males and Pygmy females is likely) all mixed products are added to the Negro stock. In spite of this a mixed group of Negro-Bambutids has arisen, basically Negro but living the life of the hunting and collecting forest peoples.

Although we have generally been led to regard the Pygmies as a parasitic group, living on their agricultural neighbours, Dr. Schebesta notes that culturally they have given more than they have received. In contrast to the true Pygmies there are, however, pygmoid peoples, who practise a degenerate imitation of Negro culture, speaking the local languages with a distinct maternal accent;

this accent is now the only clue to their original type of speech. They are racially and culturally akin to the true Pygmies, and it is often difficult to say to what degree actual mixture with other peoples has occurred. However, priority of type lies with the Bambuti of the Ituri. "The Ituri-Bambutids are the true Pygmies; Batwa and Batswa certainly share a genetic community with them, but the deviations in culture and race permit us to class them as 'pygmoids' of various sorts." The Ituri-Bambutids are culturally, racially and linguistically autonomous; adapted, from all accounts, to life in the virgin forest. It would therefore be quite wrong to regard them in the light of degenerate Negroes — indeed they are the most ancient stock inhabiting the forests to-day.

The long symbiosis between these aborigines and various Negro peoples who have penetrated their country, has had various effects: a forest population of Bambutid type has appeared, two linguistic branches have developed, and a mixed race of Negro-Bambutids has been created. The Batwa and Batswa form a genetic unity with the Ituri Pygmies, although very different from them in race and culture, and are hence differentiated as Pygmoids.

All this leaves in the air the question as to how far these variations depend upon racial mixture and how far they are a product of survival in the face of differing environments, the result of differing selective factors. However, it is clear that both Pygmies and Pygmoids are groups of mankind essentially adapted to forest life in this tropical belt: healthy and prolific, they merit every attention from the authorities concerned, for they (above all others) are the most appropriate people to populate the forests with the least amount of cultural destruction to their environment.

A. J. H. GOODWIN.

**The Bechuanaland Protectorate.** A. SILLERY.  
(Oxford University Press, Cape Town: 1952).  
236 pp. 30/-.

When Mr. Sillery was appointed Resident Commissioner in charge of Bechuanaland, he looked for a comprehensive book to tell him about the Protectorate and could not find one. He thereupon decided to compile a history of the country. The first part of his book traces the political history of Bechuanaland in the nineteenth century, mainly in relation to its neighbours. There is nothing new in this record, but the author has conveniently brought together from scattered sources the information that exists. He must however, have completed his manuscript before the publication of Dr. Jean van der Poel's important work, *The Jameson Raid*, which is not mentioned.

The second part of the book is much the most valuable. It consists of a detailed history of each of the eight tribes in the Protectorate. This kind of information, with its inevitable series of names coming thick and fast after one another, is not easy to read or to assimilate, but it is necessary to have it recorded somewhere. The colonial servant's cautious and unimaginative style is perhaps best suited to the compilation of such records.

The third part of the book is a bare twenty pages on Bechuanaland to-day. Men who are qualified to record tribal history in detail are seldom the best to write a contemporary survey. If it is not to be as deadly as a year-book, such a survey must strike a critical note or at least admit the defects apparent in colonial administration. It might have been better to omit this section and call the book what it really is, a history of Bechuanaland, making no pretence that it deals with the contemporary situation.

If Mr. Sillery has not always succeeded in subduing detail so that the reader can get a glimpse of the wood as well as the trees, he has obviously taken unlimited pains in gathering the material that fills his book, which is to be saluted as the first of its kind.

J.L.

**Shona Customary Law.** J. F. HOLLEMAN.  
(Oxford University Press, Cape Town: 1952.)  
402 pp. 42/-.

The so-called "Shona" peoples lie between the Nguni and Sotho groups of South Africa and the matrilineal tribes found further north in Central Africa. They are patrilineal cattle keepers, divided into numerous independent political units, but showing, and to some extent recognizing, a considerable degree of cultural unity. Though most are in Southern Rhodesia, there are several groups living across the borders in neighbouring territories which could reasonably be assigned to the same cultural complex. Exactly where we draw the Shona borders depends largely on our definition of the word itself, a word of alien origin which is only now coming to be accepted by those to whom it is applied.

These peoples, particularly the Central Shona, have been in close contact with Europeans for over sixty years, but hitherto there has been tragically little real ethnographic information about them available. With a few honourable exceptions, much of the considerable amount of published material is topical, concerned with the more exotic ways of the remoter groups, or with the minutiae of recent history. There has been little attempt at any thorough description or analysis of any aspects of their social organization. Dr. Holleman's book is therefore particularly valuable as it gives us such an analysis, and also a great deal of information about this important but ethnologically little known part of Africa.

Apart from a short general introduction, the book deals almost exclusively with the family and estate customs of several tribal groupings in the Charter, Buhera and Marandellas districts of Central Mashonaland. The author's main preoccupation is the institution of marriage among these people. Well over half the book is devoted to dealing in detail with the various stages by which a marriage comes about and develops, and the effects of such a union both on the parties most directly concerned and their respective kin groups. The thesis advanced — one which will be familiar to all students of primitive law — is



that marriage is not so much a union of two individuals, but rather an institution which brings two kin groups into a special type of relationship. The customs, rules and regulations governing marriage are conditioned by this fact, and can only be properly understood by appreciating that their primary function is to control relations between the kin groups involved.

Every Shona is a member of a patrilineal kin group. The widest of these units, the *rudzi*, the exogamous patrilineal clan, has little practical importance to-day. Of far greater significance is the smaller patrilineage known as *chizwarwa*: "people belonging to one *rudzi* (patrilineage) who live together and come together for ritual purposes." Since the Shona practise collateral succession, these patrilineages tend to a certain degree of permanence, and form important economic and political units. As they are exogamous units, they can only reproduce themselves by obtaining women from other similar units. One way in which this could be achieved would be by "exchange marriage", by which women of one kinship group marry into the group from which their brothers obtain their wives. Such an arrangement, according to the author, "conflicts with the established principles of Shona kinship because, through the exchange of females as wives, the two families are placed in the anomalous position of being at the same time *vakuwasha* (children-in-law) and *vateswara* (fathers-in-law) to each other." Though such marriages do occur, normally a woman does not marry into a patrilineage from which her close classificatory "brothers" have obtained wives. So the wife-giving lineage loses its members without receiving others in exchange, and hence the institution of bridewealth (*rovoro*) by means of which the wife-givers can obtain other women as wives from other lineages.

Dr. Holleman analyses all aspects of Shona family law in terms of this basic assumption. Though the thesis itself is familiar enough, it touches on the vexed question of whether "lobolo is child-price" or not. Dr. Holleman concentrates on the contractual nature both of the marriage and of the *rovoro* transaction, and appears to hold the view that in this case the *rovoro* is not "child-

price"; though the number of cattle legally due to the wife-givers is dependent on the number of children born to a union. This view may not be completely acceptable to all students of the subject, just as his treatment of marriage as a contract may give rise to a certain amount of controversy among jurists.

This book is, of course, in no way a full ethnographic account of the people with whom it deals. It would probably be an exaggeration to say that it is easy reading for the layman, but Dr. Holleman is to be congratulated on producing a book on a highly technical subject which the non-specialist can read and understand if he is prepared to take the trouble. It is to be hoped that this will be followed by other intensive studies of Shona tribes, so that we can be a little more certain of what we mean when we use the word "Shona", and so that we may know considerably more about the social organization found in this large and important area.

A.J.B.H.

Ukawamba. L. L. NKOMBA. Ed. by G. Atkins.  
(O.U.P., London: 1953.) 134 pp. 4/6.

This is the second in the series of Annotated African Texts, being published for the School of Oriental and African Studies, London. It is the story of a cattle feud between two neighbouring villages, and has been written down in the Cewa language by a Nyasaland school teacher who has been acting as Cewa assistant for two years at the School of Oriental and African Studies. Cewa is one of the languages which formed the basis upon which Union Nyanja, the official Bantu language of Nyasaland, was built many years ago. The text is very usefully annotated by Guy Atkins, lecturer in Eastern Bantu Languages at the School. The story is written in good idiomatic style, abounding in the use of ideophones, and, as is to be expected with Bantu legal discussion, replete with proverbs and other idiomatic expressions. Conjunctive writing is generally followed, but it is a great pity that the honorific prefix *A-* used with personal names has been separated from the name to which it belongs.



The London School is doing good service to Bantu language study in putting out these little books.  
C.M.D.

**The Population of Natal.** M. H. ALSOP. (Oxford University Press, Cape Town: 1952.) 144 pp. 30/-.

This publication constitutes the second volume in a series of reports on the Natal Regional Survey, which aim "to give a general picture of the economic and social structure of Natal", and to provide a "background against which the more detailed studies which are being prepared for later publication can be seen in proper perspective." Some of the more intensive surveys to be published in the near future are: "The Zulu People", "The European Settlement of Natal", "The Indian Community", "Industrial Development" and "Socio-Economic Survey of Seven Small Towns". An accurate and comprehensive demographic survey of the people of Natal is, of course, essential for a proper understanding of these more detailed studies to which the student of social science looks forward with keen interest. But *The Population of Natal* represents a valuable piece of research in its own right and forms a worthy addition to South African literature on the subject.

The author divides her subject into three parts: "Population Trends", "Geographical Distribution", and "Occupations". In Part I, she uses the conventional methods of demographic analysis to create a clear picture of the population structure and growth trends of the Province, comparing and contrasting the results with those obtained for the Union. The analysis throughout is sound and accurate and yields interesting and significant results, in spite of the limited scope and other deficiencies of the demographic data. Part II is devoted to a detailed study of the geographical distribution of the population of Natal with proper emphasis on the processes of urbanization and concentration. In Part III, a brief analysis of occupations is given on the basis of the 1946 Population Census results. This reviewer should have liked to see an analysis of trends by means

of comparison with previous census results as well as the incorporation in this chapter of at least some of the most significant results of the Census of Industrial Establishments of 1945. The analysis is nevertheless clear and meaningful.

An excellent feature of this book is the numerous maps, charts and graphs which are used throughout for purposes of illustration. These the reader would appreciate as they enable him to grasp the salient facts of the demographic situation at a glance. No doubt the limitations imposed by cost and space accounts for the complete absence of a bibliography or even a list of sources. Some readers would also find the absence of a subject index in a work like this annoying, and may feel that this lack could have been partly overcome by means of a much more detailed table of contents.

L.B.

**Pioneer's Path.** W. S. CARR. (Juta & Co., Johannesburg: 1953.) 252 pp. 19/-.

This is the story by a mining engineer of his experiences as a lad and young man in the early days in Johannesburg. He came to the Rand with his parents from Australia in 1889 at the age of seven. It is a personal narrative written in very readable style, and gives a vivid picture of those pioneer days. Interspersed are numbers of colourful anecdotes — some more suited to narration than to print! The ox-wagon trip from the Natal railhead to the Rand is well described. But perhaps the most valuable part of the book, the part most worth preserving, is the account of his Anglo-Boer War experiences, as a lad of 18, with the mounted troops operating throughout the Free State. This gives a vivid picture of the guerilla type of fighting, the clearing of the farmsteads, and the hardships suffered on both sides. Referring to the movement of the Boer women and children from the farms, the following is striking: "The womenfolk got down from the wagons and assisted the soldiers in effecting repairs (some wagons had broken down), unmindful of the soaking rain. Their sturdy assistance



and their happy banter of the soldiers made one wonder why war was waged by people who individually were kindly disposed towards each other."

It is a pity that the author did not have his Zulu spelling and grammar checked. One cannot quarrel with the way his "Kitchen Kafir" references are recorded; but it is a bit much to put into the mouth of Dinuzulu such words as "*Hlala kahle, Insizwa Uhmlopi*"! (p. 233). One wonders what our Afrikaans experts will say to the derivation of *voetzak* (given on page 178), as "translated literally, 'Foot sack', inferring 'I'll kick you out'. Literally, 'the order of the boot'!"

The latter part of the book is not nearly so interesting as the earlier chapter — except perhaps to those who personally know the author. It is, however, a welcome addition to the archives of Johannesburg.

C.M.D.

**Notes de Grammaire Rundi.** A. E. MEENSSEN.  
(Tervuren: 1952.) 24 pp.

This little roneoed study of the Rundi language of East-central Africa is a valuable tonal approach to the grammatical elements. In the phonological section Rundi is shewn to have the Central Bantu feature of the palatalization of consonants before front vowels, and has evidences of the velar pronunciation so typical of the Shona group. Rundi is one of the languages in which Dahl's Law of dissimilation operates. The dropping of the initial vowel in nouns after the copulative verb *-ri* discovers a real "copulative base" formation, e.g. *amdaso* (eyes) > *ari mdaso* (they are eyes). The author here correctly separates the verb *-ri* from the copulative base; he should have been consistent in this throughout, but on p. 18, for instance he has, incorrectly I think, recorded

*atáriGatdōrano* as one word. Probably the locative forms, with locative predicative construction, e.g. *muribatatu, kuritaata*, etc. (p. 11), should also be divided into two words — as they are in Lamba, for instance. Among the locative prefixes Meenssen includes the class 19 prefix *i-*; his examples are certainly interesting; this might well be the basic form of the *e-* locative occurring in Ganda, and as a prefixal element in Nguni locative formation. Strangely enough the locative prefixes, cl. 17 *ku-* and cl. 18 *mu-*, command a concord of cl. 16, viz *ha-*; no concordial construction is associated with the locative use of cl. 19, which is purely adverbial. On p. 17, the author points out a formal difference between classes 15 and 17, each with prefix *uku-*, e.g. cl. 15: *ukuboko ukwó tuvuyé . . .*, but cl. 17: *ukūndi ukó tugizé . . .*

The tonal treatment throughout is careful and thorough.

C.M.D.

**Chaka der Zulu.** THOMAS MOFOLO. Translated from the English by DR. P. SULZER. (Manesse Verlag, Zürich, Switzerland: 1953.) 268 pp.

This is a German translation of Mofolo's Sotho classic "Chaka". The paper, printing and binding of this little volume are most attractive. The translation has been carried out by Dr. Peter Sulzer from the English translation in a somewhat abridged form. Notes and a long, informative epilogue follow the text.

This work of Mofolo's now holds the distinction of being the first Southern Bantu book to be translated into three European languages, English, French and German. This should do much to stimulate interest in Bantu languages and the possibilities of their growing literature.

C. M. D.